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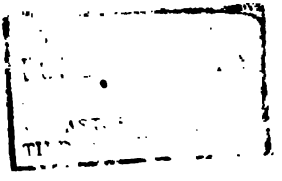
MARY ROSE OF MIFFLIN



"'It's an e-normous house, isn't it!' she said in surprise"

[PAGE 13]

MARY ROSE OF MIFFLIN

BY

FRANCES R. STERRETT

AUTHOR OF

THE "JAM GIRL" AND

"UP THE ROAD WITH SALLIE"

ILLUSTRATED BY

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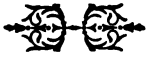

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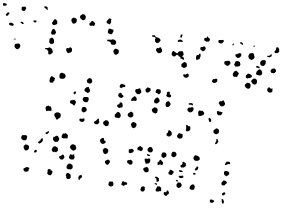

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TO THE MEMORY OF

MY FATHER AND MY MOTHER

WHO MADE A VERY FRIENDLY

PLACE IN THIS BIG WORLD

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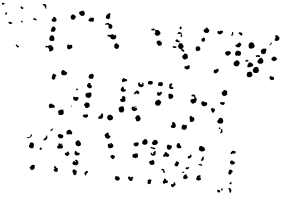

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MARY ROSE OF MIFFLIN

CHAPTER I

"IT'S there in every lease, plain as print," Larry Donovan insisted. "No childern, no dogs an' no cats. It's in every lease."

"I don't care if it is!" Kate Donovan's face was as red as a poppy and she spoke with a determination that exactly matched her husband's. "You needn't think I'm goin' to turn away my own sister's only child? Who should take care of her if I don't? Tell me that, Larry Donovan, an' be ashamed of yourself for askin' me to send her away!"

"Sure, an' I'd like the little thing here as much as you, Kate, dear," Larry said soothingly, and in her heart Mrs. Donovan knew that he meant it. "But it isn't every day that a man picks up a job like this, janitor of a swell apartmen' buildin', an' if we take in a kid when the lease says

plain as can be, no childern, no dogs an' no cats, I'll lose the job an' then how'll I put a roof over your heads an' bread in your stomachs? That's why I'm again' it."

"A clever man like you'll find a way." Mrs. Donovan's confidence was both flattering and stimulating. If a woman expects her husband to do things he just has to do them. He has no choice. "Don't you worry. You haven't been out of work since we were married 'cept the three months you was laid up with inflamm't'ry rheumatiz. The way I look at it is this: the good Lord must have meant us to have Mary Rose or he wouldn't have taken her mother an' her father an' all her relations but us. Seems if he didn't send us any of our own so we'd have plenty of room in our hearts an' home for her. She's a present to us straight from the Lord."

"That may be, Kate," Larry scratched his puzzled head. "But will the agents, will Brown an' Lawson look at it that way? The lease says——"

"Bother the lease!" Mrs. Donovan interrupted him impatiently. "What's the lease got to

do with a slip of a girl who's been left an orphan down in Mifflin?"

"That's just what I'm tryin' to tell you." Larry clung to his temper with all of his ten fingers, for it was irritating to have her refuse to understand. "If we took Mary Rose in here to live don't you s'pose all those up above," he jerked his thumb significantly toward the ceiling, " 'd know it an' make trouble? God knows they make enough as it is. They're a queer lot of folks under this roof, Kate, and that's no lie. Folks—they're cranks!" explosively. "When one isn't findin' fault another is. When I've heat enough for ol' Mrs. Johnson it's too hot for Mrs. Bracken. Mrs. Schuneman on the first floor has too much hot water an' Miss Adams on the third too little. Mrs. Rawson won't stand for Mrs. Matchan's piano an' Mrs. Matchan kicks on Mrs. Rawson's sewin' machine. Mr. Jarvis never gets his newspaper an' Mrs. Lewis al'ys gets two. Mrs. Willoughby jumps on me if a pin drops in the hall. She can't stand no noise since her mother died. She don't do nothin' but cry. I don't blame her man for stayin' away.

I'd as soon be married to a fountain. When they can't find anythin' else to jaw me about they take the laundries. An' selfish! There isn't one can see beyond the reach of his fingers. I used to think that folks were put into the world to be friendly an' helpful to each other but I've learned different." He sighed and shook his head helplessly. "Mrs. Bracken on the first floor has lived here as long as we have, two years nex' October, an' I've yet to hear her give a friendly word to anyone in the house. When little Miss Smith up on the third was sick las' winter did her nex' door neighbor lend a hand? She did not. She was just worried stiff for fear she'd catch somethin'. She gave me no peace till Miss Smith was out of the house an' into a hospital. Peace! I've forgot there was such a word. They won't stand for any kid in the house when the lease says no childern, no dogs an' no cats."

"You can't tell me anythin' about *them!*" Mrs. Donovan agreed with pleasant promptness. It

it queer, Larry, how few folks look happy when a smile's 'bout the cheapest thing a body can wear? An' it never goes out of style. I know I never get tired seein' one on old or young. All folks can't be rich nor han'some but most of us could look pleasant if we thought so, seems if. I want to tell that to little Miss Macy every time I see her, but I know full well she'd say I was impudent, so I keep my mouth shut. Maybe the tenants won't stand for a child in the house. They haven't wit to see that the Lord had his good reasons when he invented the fam'ly. But there's some way. There must be! An' we've got to find it, Larry Donovan. Are you goin' to wash Mrs. Rawson's windows today?" She changed the subject abruptly. "She called me up twice yesterday to see they needed it, as if I had nothin' to do but traipse aroun' after her."

Larry understood exactly how she felt. He had been called up more than twice to see the windows and had promised to clean them within twenty-four hours. Before he went away he patted his wife's shoulder and said again: "It isn't that I don't want the little thing here, Kate.

She'd be good for both of us. It's bad for folks to grow old 'thout young ones growin' up around 'em, but a job's a job. It wouldn't be easy for a man to get another as good as this at this time of year. See the home it gives you."

He looked proudly around the pleasant basement living-room. Open doors led into the dining-room and hall from which more doors opened into kitchen and sleeping-rooms. There was a small room at the end of the hall in which Mrs. Donovan kept her sewing machine but for which, in the last twenty-four hours, she had found another use. The apartment was very comfortable and Mrs. Donovan kept it as neat as wax. There was never any dust on her floors if the fault-finding tenants did say there was in the halls.

Mrs. Donovan was proud of her home also, but she frowned as she glanced about her. "There's plenty of room for one more," she grumbled. "That little room beyond ours is just the place for a child. But go on, Larry, we'll think of a way. We've got to! It shan't ever be said that Kate Donovan turned away her only sister's

only child. Do you mind when Mary married Sam Crocker? It was thought to be a big step up for the daughter of an Irish carpenter to marry a Crocker, the son of ol' Judge Crocker an' a lawyer himself. Seems if there never was a prettier girl than Mary an' she was happy till she died. An' now Sam's dead, too. He wasn't the man his father was. He couldn't keep money an' he couldn't earn it. Mary used to feel sorry for me, Larry, because you weren't a Crocker, but if she could see us now an', seems if, I believe she can, she mus' be glad I got a good honest hard workin' Irishman. You've a good job an' a little money in the bank. You don't owe no man a penny. That's more'n Sam Crocker could ever say an' tell the truth!"

For two years Larry Donovan had been the proud janitor of the Washington Apartment House. He had moved in before the building was fairly completed and felt that it belonged to him quite as much as to the owner, whose name he did not know, for all business was transacted through the rental agents, Brown and Lawson.

It was an attractive building. The center of

the red brick front, with its rather ornate entrance, was pushed back some ten feet. The rectangular space that was left was neatly bisected by the cement walk. On either side were grassy squares, like pocket handkerchiefs, man's size, with clumps of shrubbery in the corners for monograms. The Washington was long and broad and low, not more than three stories high, but it had an air of comfort and also of pretension that was lacking in many of the taller apartment houses whose shoulders it could not begin to touch. Under the low roof were some twenty apartments of different sizes and the occupant of each was bound by lease not to introduce a child nor a cat nor a dog. No one showed the least desire to introduce any one of the three but each went his way and insisted on his full rights with a selfish disregard of the rights and conveniences of others in a way that at first had made Larry Donovan's mouth pop wide open in amazement. Even now that he was used to it he was often surprised.

And to the Washington with its lease forbidding children and pets had come a letter from

Mifflin telling of the sudden death of Mrs. Donovan's brother-in-law. Samuel Crocker had been an unsuccessful man, as the world counts success, and had left nothing behind him but his little daughter, Mary Rose.

"It's her age that's again' her," thought Mrs. Donovan, when she was alone. "If she were a couple of years older there couldn't be any objection. Well, for the lan's sakes!" Her face broke into a broad grin. "There isn't any reason why we should—nobody need ever know," she murmured cryptically.

Ten minutes later she was busy in the little room at the end of the hall. When Larry came back he stumbled over the machine she had pushed out of her way.

"Hullo," he said. "What's up?"

Mrs. Donovan lifted a smiling face. "I'm gettin' ready."

"For what?" he asked stupidly.

"For my niece, Mary Rose Crocker." She turned around and stood before him, a scrub-cloth in her hand.

Larry frowned. "I thought we'd finished with

that, Kate. I told you about the leases. You'll have to board Mary Rose in Mifflin or send her to a convent."

"Board!" The scrub-cloth, a very banner of defiance, was waved an inch in front of his nose. "Board out my own niece, a kid of eleven? I think I see myself, Larry Donovan. An' aren't you ashamed to have such thoughts, you, a decent man? A little thing that needs a mother's care. An' who should give it to her but me, her own aunt? The Lord had his plans when he took away all her other relations an' I ain't one to interfere."

"It means the loss of my job," objected Larry sullenly.

"It does not." There was another flourish of the scrub-cloth. "Listen to me, Larry Donovan. Is there anyone in this house 't knows how old Mary Rose is? Does Mrs. Bracken or that cross-patch Miss Adams or the weepin' willow, Mrs. Willoughby, know she isn't eleven? Who's to tell 'em if we keep our mouths shut? It ain't none of their business though, seems if, there isn't one that'd be beyond makin' it their business. I'll

grant you that. Your old lease, more shame to it, says childern ain't allowed here. Mary Rose is a child but if she takes after her mother's fam'ly, an' I know in my heart she does, she'll be a big up-standin' girl, a girl anyone 'd take for fourteen. Maybe fifteen. Why, when her mother was twelve she weighed a hundred an' twenty-five pounds. I've known women of fifty that didn't weigh that!" triumphantly. "Don't you worry, Larry, dear. I've got it all planned out. There's the clothes your sister left here when she an' Ella went West las' fall. Ella was fourteen an' her clothes 'll just fit Mary Rose or I miss my guess. They'll make her look every minute of fourteen. An' a girl of fourteen isn't a child. Why, the state that's again' child labor lets a girl of fourteen go to work if she can get a permit, so we've got the law on our side. You see how easy it is, Larry?" She beamed with pride at the solution she had found for the problem that had tormented her ever since the letter had come from Mifflin.

"Do you mean you're goin' to tell lies about your own niece?" demanded Larry incredulously.

Mrs. Donovan looked at him sadly. "Why

should I tell lies?" she asked sweetly. "Sure, it's no lie to say Mary Rose is goin' on fourteen. I ain't denyin' it'll be some time before she gets to fourteen but she's goin' on fourteen more'n she is on ten. If the tenants take a wrong meaning from my words is it my fault? No, Larry," firmly. "I wouldn't tell lies for nobody an' I wouldn't let Mary Rose tell lies. We al'ys had our mouths well scoured out with soft soap when we didn't tell the truth. But it ain't no lie to say a child's goin' on fourteen when she is."

CHAPTER II

A TAXICAB stopped before the Washington Apartment House and a slim boyish little figure hopped out and stared up at the roof of the long red brick building that towered so far above.

"It's an e-normous house, isn't it!" she said in surprise.

"Here, Mary Rose." A hand reached out a basket and then a birdcage. "I'll go in with you."

"You're awfully good, Mrs. Black." Mary Rose looked at her with loving admiration. "Of course, I'd have come here all right by myself for daddy always said there was a special Providence to look after children and fools and that was why we were so well taken care of, but it certainly did make it pleasant for me to have you come all the way."

"It certainly made it pleasant for me," Mrs. Black said, and it had. Mary Rose was so en-

thusiastic on this, her first trip away from Mifflin, that she had amused Mrs. Black, who had made the journey to Waloo so many times that it had become nothing but a necessary bore. She was sorry that they had arrived at Mary Rose's destination. "Now, where do we find your aunt?" She, too, looked up at the red brick building that faced them so proudly.

"My Uncle Larry's the janitor of this splendid mansion!" Mary Rose told her joyously, although there was a trace of awe in her birdlike voice. The mansion seemed so very, very large to her. "Is janitor the same as owner, Mrs. Black? It's—it's——" she drew a deep breath as if she found it difficult to say what it was. "It's wonderful! There isn't one house in all Mifflin so big and grand, is there? It looks more," she cocked her head on one side, "like the new Masonic Temple on Main Street than anybody's home."

"So it does," agreed Mrs. Black, leading the way into the vestibule, where she found a bell labeled "Janitor."

When Kate Donovan answered it she saw a

pleasant-faced, smartly clad woman with a child in a neat, if shabby, boy's suit of blue serge, belted blouse over shrunken knickerbockers. She knew at once that they had come to look at the vacant apartment on the second floor.

"An I'll have to tell her we don't have no childern here," she said to herself, and she sighed. "I wish Larry had a place in a house that was overrun with childern. Seems if I hate to tell her how it is."

But the pleasant-faced smartly clad woman smiled at her as no prospective tenant had ever smiled and asked sweetly: "Is this Mrs. Donovan?"

Before Kate Donovan could admit it the boyish little figure ran to her.

"My Aunt Kate! I know it is. It's my Aunt Kate!"

"My soul an' body!" murmured the startled Mrs. Donovan, staring stupidly at the child embracing her knees.

"I brought your little niece," began Mrs. Black.

"Niece!" gasped Mrs. Donovan in astonish-

ment, for the figure at her knees did not look like any niece she had ever seen. "Sure, it's a boy!"

The little face upturned to her broke into a radiant smile. "That's what everyone says. But I'm not a boy, I'm not! Am I, Mrs. Black? I'm a girl and my name's Mary Rose and I'm almost eleven——"

"H-sh, h-sh, dearie!" Mrs. Donovan's hand slipped over the red lips and she sent a quick glance over her shoulder. Bewildered and surprised as she was she realized that her niece's age was not to be shouted out in the vestibule of the Washington in any such joyous fashion. "My soul an' body," she murmured again as she looked at the sturdy little figure in knickerbockers. "You're Mary Rose Crocker?" she asked doubtfully. She almost hoped she wasn't.

"Mary Rose Crocker," repeated the red lips and the knickerbockered legs jumped up and down.

"My soul an' body!" Mrs. Donovan murmured helplessly. "Will you come down to my rooms, ma'am," she said to Mrs. Black, as she tried to remember her manners and not think how she was

to tell Larry the truth. Why, this child was undersized rather than over. Her mother might have weighed a hundred and twenty-five pounds when she was twelve but Mary Rose couldn't weigh seventy. Dear, dear, why couldn't she just as well have been bigger? But after one glance at the glowing little face, Kate Donovan would have lost almost everything rather than her right to take care of diminutive Mary Rose.

Mrs. Black smiled at her. She liked her honest good-natured face. It was a shining doorplate for the big heart behind it. She had been rather worried over Mary Rose's only living relative, for she was fond of Mary Rose and wanted her to have a real home.

"Thank you, but I fear I must go on. Our train was a little late. I am glad to have met you and if you like Mary Rose half as much as I do you will think you are a lucky woman to have her always with you. Good-by, Mary Rose. Thank you for coming with me."

Mary Rose threw her arms about her friend. "Thank you for bringing me," she whispered.

"Have you everything? Her trunk is at the

station and she has the check," she explained to Mrs. Donovan. "Good-by." And with another kiss for Mary Rose she was gone. They could hear the purr of the taxicab as it dashed up the street.

Mary Rose drew a deep breath. "It's very pleasant to get to the end of a journey," she began a trifle tremulously. Mary Rose was beginning to feel a bit forlorn at being left alone with an aunt she had never seen before. "Mrs. Black's a very kind lady and she brought me here in a taxicab. It's very pleasant riding in a taxicab."

"I've no doubt it is," remarked Mrs. Donovan, who knew taxicabs only by sight. "Now, Mary Rose, we'll go down to my rooms. Is this your canary?" She looked oddly at the bird-cage.

"Yes, that's Jennie Lind. I couldn't leave her behind and Mrs. Black said you'd be sure to have room for her, for all she needs is a window to hang in and everybody has at least one window. Your house is very large, isn't it?" admiringly. "It makes me think of a palace, although it is something like the new Masonic Temple in Mif-

flin. Do you live in the cellar?" she asked in astonishment as her aunt led the way down the basement stairs. "I've never lived in a cellar before. In Mifflin our cellar had only room for jellies and pickles and a closet for vegetables, turnips and parsnips, you know."

"This isn't a cellar," she was told rather sharply. "It's a basement."

"Oh!" Mary Rose tried to see the difference between a cellar and a basement and had little difficulty, for nothing could have been more different from the little Mifflin cellar with its swinging shelf for preserves and pickles, its dark closet for vegetables, than Aunt Kate's basement apartment. The sun streamed into the windows, only half of which were below the level of the street, and the rooms looked very bright and pleasant to tired Mary Rose.

"It's—it's very pleasant," she said. "But do you always live down here?" She couldn't understand why her aunt should choose rooms in the cellar when she had such a large house.

Her aunt did not answer her but asked a question of her own. "Mary Rose, what makes you

dress like that, like a boy?" She couldn't imagine why.

Mary Rose regarded her small person with a blush and a frown. "I know. Isn't it horrid? I'd lots rather wear girls' clothes, but you see these saved washing, and Lena, who took care of daddy and me, made a fuss about the washing almost every week, so daddy said boys' clothes were pleasanter than arguments. Aunt Kate," her voice was tragic, "I'm 'most eleven years old and I haven't ever had a white dress with a blue sash in all my life. I never even had a hair ribbon!"

"My soul an' body!" murmured Aunt Kate, and derived no more satisfaction from the exclamation than she had the other times she had used it.

"Don't you think boys should wear boys' clothes and girls girls' clothes, Aunt Kate? Of course, if you have to think of the washing, too, I won't say a word and I'll try to be happy in these. But I do hate them. I think little girls' clothes are beautiful. All my life I've wanted a white dress with lace on it and a blue sash. Gladys Evans has one. She wore it at the church social.

I spoke a piece and I had to wear these ugly clothes. It hurt my pride awful but daddy said that was because I didn't look at it right, that if I had the right kind of an eye I'd see washing in a white dress instead of beauty. But I guess it's hard to see right when you haven't ever had anything but boys' clothes. Oh, Aunt Kate!" she put her arms around her aunt. "I do think that it is good of you to want me to live with you. You're the only relation I have out of Heaven. I don't quite understand about that, when Gladys Evans has four sisters and a brother and three aunts and two uncles and a pair of grandfathers and even one grandmother. It doesn't seem just fair, does it? But I think you're nicer than all of hers put together. One of her aunts is cross-eyed and another lives in California and one of her uncles is stingy," she whispered. "You—you're beautiful!" And she hugged her again.

Mrs. Donovan dropped weakly into a chair and her arms went around Mary Rose. She had never realized how empty they had been until they enclosed Mary Rose.

"You didn't say anything about bringing my

friends with me," went on Mary Rose happily, "but of course I couldn't leave Jenny Lind and George Washington behind. George Washington has the same name as your house," she gurgled. "Wouldn't you like to see him?" She slipped from her aunt's arms to the chair where she had put her basket. There had been sundry angry upheavals of the cover but it was tightly tied with a stout string. Mrs. Donovan had scarcely noticed it. She had been too bewildered to see anything but Mary Rose.

Mary Rose untied the basket cover but before she could raise it a big maltese cat had pushed it aside and jumped to the floor and stood stretching himself in front of Mrs. Donovan's horrified eyes.

"Mary Rose!" she cried. It was all she could say.

"Isn't he a beauty?" Mary Rose turned shining eyes to her as she patted her pet. "I've had him ever since he was a weeny kitten. Mrs. Campbell gave him to me when I had the tonsilitis. We adore each other. You see his mother is dead and so is mine. We're both orphans."

And she caught the orphaned George Washington to her and hugged him. "I've a dog, too, but I left him in Mifflin."

"Thank God for that," murmured Mrs. Donovan under her breath.

"His name is Solomon," went on Mary Rose. "He was such a wise little puppy that daddy said he should have a wise name. The superintendent of schools made out a list for me and I copied each one on a separate piece of paper and let the puppy take his choice. He took Solomon and daddy said he showed his sense for Solomon was the very wisest of all. But that shows just how smart Solomon was even as a puppy. Jimmie Bronson's taking care of him until I send for him. He said he'd just as soon I never sent, but of course I will as soon as I can. Do you see Jenny Lind, George Washington?" She took the cat's head in her hands and turned it to the cage in which Jenny Lind hopped restlessly. "They aren't the friends I'd like them to be," she explained almost apologetically to her aunt. "Sometimes it worries me. Dear me, I wish I could have a talk with Noah! Don't you often wonder

how he managed in the ark? It must have been hard with cats and mice and snakes and birds and lions and people. Daddy thought Noah must have been a fine animal tamer, like the one in the circus Gladys Evans' father took us to, only better, of course. Don't you think you'll like George Washington?" she asked timidly, rather puzzled by her aunt's silence.

"He's a beautiful cat," gulped Mrs. Donovan, who was more puzzled than Mary Rose. What should she do? What could she do? She took both Mary Rose and George Washington in her arms. "Listen to me, Mary Rose, for a minute. You know your Uncle Larry is janitor of this building?"

"It's a fine building," admiringly. "He must be awful rich."

"He isn't rich at all," hurriedly. "If he was he wouldn't be a janitor. A janitor is the man who takes care of it——"

"Oh," Mary Rose was frankly disappointed. "I thought he owned it."

"You see other folks live here, lots of them, an' the man who owns it won't let them have

any cats or dogs," she hesitated, she hated to say it, "or childern in it. It's in the lease. A lease is the same as a law."

"Won't have any cats or dogs or children!" Mary Rose's voice was shrill with astonishment and her eyes were as big as saucers. "Why, everybody has children! They always have had. Don't you remember, even Adam and Eve? In Mifflin everyone has children."

"It's different in Waloo. You see the man who owns this house thinks childern are noisy an' destructive." She tried her best to find an excuse for the unknown owner. "He doesn't know, of course. He's probably a cross old bachelor."

"But I'm a child," wailed Mary Rose suddenly. "Wha-what are you going to do with me?" Her face whitened.

Her aunt put her hand under the little chin and turned Mary Rose's startled face up so that the two pairs of eyes looked directly into each other. "You're not a child, Mary Rose. You're a great big girl goin' on fourteen. Don't ever forget that. If anyone asks you how old you

are you just tell 'em you're goin' on fourteen. That's what you are, you know."

"Yes," doubtfully. "But I have to go to eleven first and then to twelve and thirteen——"

"Waloo folks don't care about that," her aunt interrupted quickly. "They don't care to hear about any but the fourteen. Don't you ever forget."

"I won't," promised Mary Rose solemnly, too puzzled just then to think it out. "But what about George Washington? He's just a cat." She looked dubiously at George Washington and shook her head. Nothing could be made of him but a cat. "An orphan cat!" she added firmly.

"I know, dearie." Aunt Kate's arms tightened around her. "An' I hate to ask you to give him up. I know you love him but if you keep him here it may mean that your uncle will lose his job an' if he did that there wouldn't be any roof over our heads nor bread for our stomachs."

"Oh!" Mary Rose stared at her. "Would that cross old bachelor owner make him not be janitor?"

Her aunt nodded. "We'll have to find some-

one to take care of him—just for a while," she added quickly as she saw two big tears in Mary Rose's blue eyes. "Some day, please God, we'll have a home where we can have him with us."

Mary Rose stood very still, trying in vain to understand this strange world to which she had come, a world where children and cats and dogs were not considered precious and desirable. Suddenly a bell rang.

"That's Mrs. Rawson," murmured Aunt Kate. "I'll bet she wants me to run up an' look at her windows again. I'll be right back, Mary Rose," she promised as she hurried away to answer the insistent jangle of Mrs. Rawson's bell.

CHAPTER III

LEFT alone, Mary Rose caught George Washington to her heart and stood staring about the room. She shook her head. This might be a beautiful palace but she was very much afraid that she was not going to like it. She walked slowly into the next room and then to the kitchen, whose windows faced the alley.

Across the driveway she could see a broad open space, the yard of a rambling old-fashioned house. A man was cleaning an automobile and through the open window Mary Rose could hear his cheery whistle. There was something about the old-fashioned house and the spacious yard that reminded Mary Rose of Mifflin, where people loved children and had pets. The puzzled frown left her face, and clutching George Washington closer she went out of the back door and across the alley.

"If you please," she said, her heart beating so fast that she was almost choked, "would you take a cat to board?"

She had to say it a second time before the man heard her. He looked up in surprise. He had a frank, pleasant face with twinkling eyes and Mary Rose liked him at once.

"Hullo, brother," he said, quite as cordially as a Mifflin man would have spoken. "And where did you drop from?"

"I didn't drop," answered literal Mary Rose. "I came across the alley," and she nodded toward the big apartment house. It now turned a white brick face to her. Mary Rose almost forgot her errand when she saw that. In Mifflin houses were the same color all the way around. "Why—why, it's two-faced!" she cried. "The front is all red and now the back is all white. It's just like an enchanted palace."

"It is an enchanted palace," grumbled the man.

Mary Rose flew to his side. "Oh, is there a princess there? A beautiful princess?" she begged.

The man colored under the tan the sun and

wind had spread over his face. "There is," he admitted, "a most beautiful princess."

"And a witch?" insisted Mary Rose. "A wicked witch?" The color flew into her face also.

"The wickedest witch that could ever enslave a beautiful princess. Her darned old name is Independence!"

Mary Rose did not understand and she thought it was an odd name for a witch but she wished to know more. "And is the prince there?" she demanded thirstily.

The man's face turned redder than before. "The prince is here," he said sadly. "Right here. And he might as well be in Jericho," he added under his breath.

"I've heard the Presbyterian minister speak of Jericho but I never read of it in any fairy-tale. Oh, dear! I hope the prince won't go there. I want him to stay here and rescue the pretty princess from that wicked witch In-independence," she stumbled over the unfamiliar word.

The man looked at her. He had to look away down to find her, for he was tall, over six feet,

and Mary Rose was not much more than half that, but when he finally did find her Mary Rose was amazed to see the look of determination that came into his sunburned face.

"He'll do it," he said, half under his breath. "It's all very well for a girl to be independent, but she needn't be so darned independent that she won't listen to a word a man says."

"I don't think I understand," Mary Rose ventured to say when there was a long pause.

Her new friend laughed. "No, of course, you don't." He put his hands on her shoulders. "As man to man," he said, "the modern girl is getting to be almost too much of a problem for the modern man. I don't suppose you understand that, either. But wait ten or fifteen years and you will. Godfrey! I feel sorry for you. If they keep on as they've started what will they be in ten years? Did you say you were living over there?" He looked toward the white wall.

Mary Rose nodded her yellow head. "I thought perhaps you might like to take a cat to board. An orphan cat," she explained pityingly.

Jerry Longworthy swallowed a laugh when he

saw that there was real trouble in her face. "Suppose you climb into the car and tell me why you're looking for a boarding place for an orphan cat?"

Mary Rose smiled radiantly as she obeyed and, with George Washington cuddled against her, she told him all about it.

"My Uncle Larry," she began very importantly, "is the janitor of that wonderful two-faced palace."

"Is he, indeed," remarked Jerry Longworthy, lighting his pipe.

"But he doesn't own it. At first I thought he did. I used to live in Mifflin, where there aren't any houses like that. Every family has its own house. Some of them are little but Mrs. Black's is as big as yours. She brought me to Waloo and we had a taxicab all the way."

"All the way!" Mr. Jerry showed a proper amount of astonishment. "That was a treat."

"It was to me," simply. "There aren't any taxicabs in Mifflin, just one old hack that was made before the war, Mr. Day said, and that's a very long time ago."

"It is," agreed Mr. Jerry. "Longer than either you or I can remember. I expect you are all of ten years old?"

"I'm older than that." She would have told him how much older but she remembered what Aunt Kate had said. "I'm going on fourteen." It sounded so aged that she felt quite important. "And my name is Mary Rose Crocker."

"Mary Rose?" He lifted his eyebrows, and Mary Rose knew at once that he was thinking that boys' clothes and girls' names do not usually go together. She flushed.

"I wear them to save washing," she said with a certain dignity as she touched the shrunken knickerbockers. "Girls' clothes are a lot of trouble. Lena said they weren't worth it."

"I'm sure she's right. You're only a little ahead of the style. All girls'll be wearing them soon, no doubt. They're that independent. How old is the orphan George?" He changed a subject that was evidently so painful to Mary Rose.

"He's 'most five. I got him when I had tonsilitis, when I was six," unconsciously betraying to anyone who could add five to six the secret

Aunt Kate had begged her to keep. "And we've never been separated a whole day. But now," she swallowed the lump in her throat and went on bravely, "you see the owner of that palace won't have any children nor any dogs nor any cats in it."

"I know." Mr. Jerry seemed to know everything. "What are you going to do?"

"If we kept him Uncle Larry would lose the janitor and we wouldn't have a roof over our heads nor bread for our stomachs, so I thought if I could find a pleasant place for him to board near by I could see him often. I couldn't give him away, for Aunt Kate says perhaps the Lord'll give us a real home some day where we can all be together. When I saw your house it made me think of Mifflin and I wondered if you had a cat and if you hadn't if you would like to board one?" Her face was painfully serious as she lifted it to Jerry Longworthy.

"Well," he considered the question gravely. "Can you pay his board?"

"I've a dollar and forty-three cents. The forty-three cents I saved and the dollar Mr. Black

gave me when he took me to the train in Mifflin. How much should a cat's board be?" anxiously.

"How much milk does he drink? Milk's seven cents a quart in Waloo."

"Oh, not more than a quart a day," eagerly. "And he's almost too fat now."

"A quart a day would be seven times seven——"

"I know. I know all my tables up to twelve times twelve. That would be forty-nine cents. Do you think fifty cents would be enough?"

"I should think fifty cents a week very good board for a cat. Suppose we go in and see what my Aunt Mary has to say."

His Aunt Mary proved to be a plump lady with a round rosy face, who agreed with Mary Rose that children and cats and dogs were most desirable additions to a family. She seemed quite glad to take George Washington as a boarder and thought that fifty cents a week was enough to charge as long as Mary Rose solemnly promised to come over every day and help take care of him. Mary Rose promised most solemnly.

"I'm so glad." She beamed on Mr. Jerry and his Aunt Mary and hugged George Washington. "It's a great relief to find a pleasant boarding place. I can pay for two weeks, almost three weeks now," she offered.

Mr. Jerry started to speak but his Aunt Mary shook her head and he shut his mouth with the words inside.

"We don't take board in advance for a cat," said his Aunt Mary in a way that told Mary Rose such a thing was never done. "In fact, we've never taken a cat to board before. I think it will be more satisfactory if we wait until the end of the week, when we can tell just how much milk he will drink," she added soberly.

"He's awfully greedy." Mary Rose looked sadly at the greedy George Washington. "But he's always had all he wanted. I can't tell you how much obliged I am and I'll come over every day. It's awfully good of you to take him when you haven't any other boarders."

"I'd take you, too, if I could," Mr. Jerry's Aunt Mary murmured as she went to get a ginger cooky.

"I'm going to find the beautiful princess," Mary Rose told Mr. Jerry, when she said good-by to him a few minutes later. "And when I do shall I tell her that the prince is not going to Jericho?"

"Do," he said and his face went all red again. "Tell her that he's going to stay right here on the job, that he will never give her up."

"Never give her up," repeated Mary Rose. She tried to say it as firmly as he had said it and she waved her hand as she went across the alley and into the back door of the Washington, with a most delicious thrill at entering such a two-faced building.

Mr. Jerry looked after her and frowned. Then he shook his fist at the Washington.

"You are an enchanted palace," he told it sternly. "If it weren't for doggone places like you, girls would have to stay at home. They couldn't go out in the world and grow so independent that they think work is the biggest thing in creation. Oh, Godfrey! it isn't normal for any girl to like a job better than a perfectly good man. When I think of Elizabeth Thorley wasting her-

self on advertisements for Bingham and Henderson's sickening jams when she might be making a Heaven for me it sends my temperature up until I'm afraid of spontaneous combustion. She wouldn't care if I did blow up and turn to ashes. She wouldn't care what happened to me so long as she could send out a new poster for peach marmalade. She wants to live her own life and not be tied down to a man or a home," he groaned. "Darn these feministic ideas, anyway! I wish I had been my own grandfather. The girl he wanted wasn't on any old factory payroll."

He had been in love with Elizabeth Thorley ever since one night, almost a year ago, when he had looked across a room and seen her red-brown hair, her oval face with its uplifted pointed chin, and met her laughing eyes. He had held her gaze for the fraction of a moment and in that time his heart had stopped beating. When it began again the world was a very different place to him. But, alas, it was not a different place to her. She had suffered no magical change by the short interchange of glances.

They had been the best of friends. They had

a certain similarity of tastes and interests, for he was an architect and she was an advertising artist. But when he asked for more than friendship she tilted her white chin a bit higher and told him frankly that she was not the type of girl to want or think of marriage; that all she wished was her work and she thanked her lucky stars every night of her life that she had enough of it to be independent.

"Marriage to me is a many-headed dragon," she said. "It eats up a girl's individuality, her ambitions, her talents. Oh, yes, it does! I've seen it too many times not to know, and I want to keep Elizabeth Thorley's personality for her as long as she lives. I shan't merge it in that of any man."

She valued his friendship; she would like to keep it always, she added, but she did not want his love. She did not want any man's love. That was why Mr. Jerry shook his fist at the white face of the Washington and swore that he loathed the idea of feminine independence, loathed it from the very bottom of his heart.

"Why, Mary Rose, wherever have you

been?" demanded startled Mrs. Donovan, when Mary Rose, a trifle breathless and minus George Washington, slipped into the basement flat. "I've been lookin' everywhere for you."

"I'm sorry but I just had to find a boarding place for George Washington. Oh, Aunt Kate, do you suppose there's any way a girl like me can earn fifty cents every week?"

CHAPTER IV

WHEN Larry Donovan saw his niece she had changed her shabby boy's suit of blue serge for the clothes that Ella Murphy had outgrown. Ella had astonished and disgusted her mother by lengthening herself, in a single night, it seemed to the outraged Mrs. Murphy, to such an extent that a new outfit was necessary.

"It may be well enough for asparagus and tulips to grow like that, but it's all wrong for a girl," she had said resentfully. "I just wish the Power that lengthened her had to find her dresses and petticoats and things to make her decent to go to the grandmother that's never seen her. Here I am, all but ready to start, an' I have to get her new clothes. Childern may be a blessing, there's folks that say they are, but there's times I can't see anything but the worry and the expense of 'em."

So the lengthened Ella's discarded garments

had been left behind for Mrs. Donovan to dispose of. They had been packed away and forgotten until Mary Rose arrived and reminded her Aunt Kate that a perfectly good outfit for a girl of fourteen was in one of her closets.

Fortunately Ella had been slim as well as tall and the middy blouse that Mrs. Donovan tried on Mary Rose did not look too much as if it had been made for her grandmother. The bright plaid skirt trailed on the floor but Aunt Kate turned back the hem which still left the skirt hanging considerably below Mary Rose's shabby shoe tops, much to her delight.

She hung over the machine, her tongue clattering an unwearied accompaniment to the whir of the wheel, as Mrs. Donovan sewed the basted hem.

"Did you know there was an enchanted princess in your house, Aunt Kate?" she demanded excitedly.

Mrs. Donovan had not known it and her surprise made her break her thread. When Mary Rose had explained she grunted something.

"You mean the girl that Mr. Longworthy's

crazy about? She's up above an' won't have nothin' to do with men. 'I don't want nothin' in my life but my work,' says she to me, herself. That's all very well for now but let her wait a few years an' she'll sing a different tune or I miss my guess. She ain't enchanted, Mary Rose, she's just pig-headed an' young."

Mary Rose was disappointed. "Mr. Jerry said she was under the spell of the wicked witch, Independence," she insisted. "Wasn't it good of him to take George Washington to board? It's such a relief to have found a pleasant place so near. I'm sure they'll be friendly to him."

Mrs. Donovan mentally planned to slip across the alley and see Mr. Jerry and his Aunt Mary herself about George Washington's board as she looked into the earnest little face so near her own.

"Sure, they will," she said above the whir of the machine. "But you mustn't make friends of everyone you meet, Mary Rose. A city isn't like the country. I suppose you knew everyone in Mifflin?"

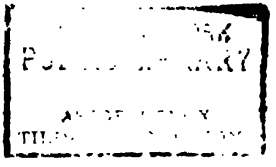
"Everyone," with an emphatic shake of her

head. "Animals and vegetables as well as people. And everyone knew me."

"Well, it won't be that way in Waloo," Mrs. Donovan explained. "No one knows you an' you don't know anyone. You mustn't go makin' up to strangers. A little girl can't tell who's good an' who's bad."

"She can if she has the right kind of an eye," Mary Rose told her eagerly. "Daddy said so over and over again. He said the good Lord never made bad people because it would be a waste of time and dust when he could just as well make them good. And if you had the right kind of an eye you could see that there was good in every single person. Daddy said I had the right kind. Mine's blue but it isn't in the color, for his eyes were brown and they were right, too. It's something," she hesitated as she tried to explain what was so very clear and simple to her. "It's something to do with the inside and your heart. I shouldn't wonder, Aunt Kate, if you had the right kind. Isn't it easier for you to see that people are kind and good than it is to see them bad?"

"'You can't ever know, Aunt Kate, how splendid it is to wear skirts.'"



It wasn't for Aunt Kate. A two-years' residence in the basement of the Washington had about convinced her that all human nature was sour but she disliked to tell Mary Rose so when Mary Rose so plainly expected her to agree that the world was inhabited by a superior sort of angel. She snipped her threads and drew the plaid skirt from under the needle.

Mary Rose fairly squealed with delight when she was in the white middy blouse and the skirt flapped about her ankles in such a very grown-up manner. Mary Rose's yellow hair had always been bobbed but no one had seen that it was trimmed before she left Mifflin and it hung in rather straight lanky locks about her elfish face. Some of the locks were long enough to be drawn under one of Ella's discarded red hair ribbons and Aunt Kate pinned back the others. The result was a very different Mary Rose from the one who had jumped out of the taxicab a few hours ago. She climbed on a chair and looked at her reflection in the mirror of her aunt's bureau.

"I do think it's too lovely!" she cried raptur-

ously. "You can't ever know, Aunt Kate, how splendid it is to wear skirts. Sometimes," she whispered confidentially, "I used to wonder if I really was a girl. You don't think it will make too much washing?" anxiously. "I shouldn't want to be a burden to you. But I do love this skirt! I wish Gladys Evans could see me!"

She was still admiring her new clothes in the mirror when her Uncle Larry came in.

"Hullo," he said in a loud cheery voice. "Who's this? Kate, Mrs. Bracken wants to see you."

Mary Rose tore her eyes from the fascinating reflection in the mirror that she could scarcely believe was herself, and looked at the big broad-shouldered man in the doorway. He had been frowning but the frown slipped away from his forehead when he gazed into Mary Rose's blue eyes, so that he looked very kind and friendly. Mary Rose jumped from the chair and ran over to him.

"I'm Mary Rose," she said a bit shyly. This unknown uncle was so big and strong and he was janitor of this strange two-faced palace. A

janitor sounded powerful and important even if Aunt Kate had explained that he wasn't, so that Mary Rose felt a little shy with him.

"Mary Rose, eh?" He picked her up and raised her in his arms until her face was on a level with his. "Sure, I think you're more of a Rose than a Mary," he added as he kissed the face that was as pink as any flower.

Her arms met around his neck. "That's because I'm so happy to be with you and Aunt Kate," she whispered. "You know, after daddy went to Heaven there wasn't anyone in the whole world that belonged to me in Mifflin but George Washington, and my dog that Jimmie Bronson borrowed, and Jenny Lind, and now to have a great big uncle and a beautiful aunt of my very own m-makes me very happy."

"Who's George Washington?" asked Uncle Larry as he found a chair and sat down with her in his arms.

Mary Rose told him about her cat, which was boarding across the alley, and Uncle Larry thought to himself that he would go over and make sure that the cat was all right. It was a

thundering shame the child couldn't have her pet with her. He'd like to tell the owner of the Washington a few things if he knew who he was and if there was no fear of losing his job.

"And Jenny Lind," Mary Rose was saying eagerly. "I must show you Jenny Lind." She slipped down and ran into the next room to come back with a birdcage. "Aunt Kate says I may keep her here because there isn't one word in that law about canary birds."

"No, thank God, there isn't," said Uncle Larry. "The old grouch must have forgotten about them." He admired Jenny Lind as much as Mary Rose could wish.

"The real Jenny Lind was a girl with a bird in her throat," Mary Rose explained as she leaned against his knee. "My own grandfather heard it and he told daddy and daddy told me that to hear her sing made a man think he was in Heaven. So when Mrs. Lenox gave me this beautiful bird for my very own, of course, I named her Jenny Lind. Mrs. Lenox called her Cleopatra. Wasn't that a silly name for a bird? Mrs. Lenox must have liked it or she wouldn't have given it to any-

thing. Isn't it the luckiest thing that everyone hasn't the same likes? Just suppose everyone had been like my father and my mother and all the little girls were named Mary Rose? I think it's the most beautiful name in the entire dictionary, but Gladys Evans in Mifflin said it was common. She counted up and she knew seven Marys, with her grandmother and old Mrs. Wilcox, who's deaf and half blind, and four Roses. But there wasn't one Mary Rose!" triumphantly. "And that made all the difference in the world. My daddy chose the Mary because he said there wasn't a better name for a little girl to have for her own and my little mother chose the Rose because she said I was just like a flower when she saw me first. Don't you like it, Uncle Larry?"

"I do!" Uncle Larry could not have told her how much he liked it, but as he listened to her chatter he wondered how on earth Kate was going to make the tenants of the Washington think the child was fourteen.

"And I like your name," Mary Rose was kind enough to say. "And Aunt Kate's, too," she

added, as Aunt Kate came back from her interview with Mrs. Bracken.

"Her girl's gone," she said in answer to Uncle Larry's question. "I don't wonder. That's the fourth in three weeks. Seems if she only stays home long enough to hire an' discharge 'em. She heard I had a niece with me an' she wants her to go up every mornin' an' wash the dishes till she gets another girl. So, Mary Rose, if you really want to earn money to pay for George Washington's board, here's a chance."

"Oh!" Mary Rose slid to the floor and clapped her hands. "I do think this is the most wonderful world that ever was. I just wish for something and then I have it."

"That'll happen just so long as you wish for what you can get," Aunt Kate told her.

When Mary Rose was tucked in bed, where she told Aunt Kate she felt like a long green pickle in a glass jar because she never had slept in a cellar—a basement—before, and they always had pickles in their cellar, Aunt Kate explained to her husband about Mrs. Bracken.

"I couldn't say anythin', but, of course, she'd

come. Mrs. Bracken had the nerve to tell me she knew Mary Rose wasn't a child for childern weren't allowed in the buildin'. What was I to do, Larry Donovan, but say she'd wash her dirty old dishes? It won't hurt Mary Rose an' I'll give her a hand if she needs it. Isn't it a pity though that Mary Rose couldn't have taken more after her mother's fam'ly? Seems if I never saw such a small eleven-year-old as she is."

CHAPTER V

ENVELOPED in a blue and white checked gingham apron of her aunt's, Mary Rose washed Mrs. Bracken's dishes. Mrs. Donovan had brought her up to the apartment and Mary Rose had looked curiously around the rather bare and empty halls. There was something in the atmosphere of them that made her catch Mrs. Donovan by the hand.

"It feels like the Presbyterian Church in the middle of the week," she whispered. "It doesn't seem as if anyone really lived here, Aunt Kate."

"You'll find folks live here," Mrs. Donovan said grimly as she unlocked the Bracken door. "We don't ever get a chance to forget 'em."

Mrs. Bracken had gone out with her husband and there was no one in the apartment that seemed so big and grand to Mary Rose's unsophisticated eyes. But Aunt Kate sniffed at the untidy kitchen and living-room.

"Seems if it was just about as important for a woman to make a home as a club," she said under her breath as she picked up papers and straightened chairs in the living-room. She found the dish pan and showed Mary Rose what to do.

"I know how to wash dishes, Aunt Kate." Mary Rose was in a fever to begin. "I washed them for Lena and no one could be more particular than she was. We got our hot water out of a kettle instead of a pipe." She watched with interest the water run steaming from the faucet. "Wouldn't it be grand if Mrs. Bracken had a little girl so we could wash dishes together? I don't mind doing them all by myself a bit, Aunt Kate. I'm glad to do it. I know there's nothing so splendid as a girl being useful. Daddy told me that and Mr. Mann, the minister, and Gladys Evans' grandmother and all the other grown-uppers. But I think the grandest part is to earn George Washington's board. It's splendid to have someone besides yourself to work for," she added with a very adult air.

She sang to herself as she worked, after Aunt Kate had left her.

"Where have you been, Billie boy, Billie boy?
Where have you been, charming Billie?
I've been to see my wife, she's the treasure of my life,
She's a young thing and can't leave her mother."

It was Lena's favorite song and it had many verses. Mary Rose sang them all with gusto.

"If I didn't make a noise I'd be scared of the quiet," she thought. "I never was in a home that was so little like a home. It's because there isn't anything alive in it. There isn't even a Lady Washington geranium." She was astonished that there wasn't, for in Mifflin pots of geraniums and other plants were always to be seen in sunny windows. "It gives you a hollow feeling—not empty for bread and butter but for people," she decided.

Mary Rose had never lived where there were no live things. "Dogs and cats and birds help to make you feel friendly toward all the world. And so do plants. I guess that's true of all the things God made," she thought as she hung up

the dish pan on the nail Aunt Kate had pointed out.

She stood in the doorway, looking back at the clean and tidy kitchen with considerable satisfaction. She had done it all herself and it would have pleased even the critical Lena.

A door across the hall opened suddenly and Mary Rose swung around and looked into the curious face of an elderly woman who was almost as broad as she was tall. Her round face wore a scowl and the corners of her mouth turned straight down.

"Good morning," Mary Rose said in the neighborly fashion that was in vogue in Mifflin.

"H-m." The fat lady eyed her over gold spectacles. "Can't Mrs. Bracken get a full-grown girl to do her work? I thought she was against child labor."

She laughed unpleasantly.

"I'm not working regular," Mary Rose said quickly, with a blush because she was not so large as the fat lady thought she should be. "I'm Mrs. Donovan's niece and I've just come from Mifflin. I'm only washing Mrs. Bracken's dishes un-

til she gets another girl, so I can earn money to pay for George Washington's board."

"George Washington's board?" echoed the fat lady. "Come here, Mina," she called over her shoulder, "and listen to this child. Who's George Washington?" She was frankly curious and so was the maid, who had joined her.

"He's my cat. I've had him ever since I had tonsilitis. Aunt Kate says the law won't let him live here with me, so I'm boarding him over there." And she nodded in the direction of the alley and the hospitable Mr. Jerry.

"Cats here? I should say not!" exclaimed Mrs. Schuneman. She watched Mary Rose as she carefully locked the door of the Bracken apartment. The child puzzled her and when Mrs. Schuneman was puzzled over anything or anyone she had to find out all about them. She had nothing else to do. Once she had been an active harassed woman, busy with the problem of how she was to support herself and her two daughters, but just when the problem seemed about to be too much for her to solve a brother died and left her money enough to live comfortably for

the remainder of her life. She had moved from the crowded downtown rooms to the more pretentious Washington and tried to think that she was happier for the change, but really she was very lonely and discontented. Miss Louise Schuneman was too busy with church work and Miss Lottie Schuneman had a bridge club four afternoons a week and went to the matinée and the moving picture shows the other afternoons, so that neither of them was a companion for their mother. Mrs. Schuneman had nothing to do but wonder about the neighbors she did not know and tell her maid how much admired her daughters were and how hard she had worked herself until the good God had seen fit to take her brother from his packing plant. "If you're the janitor's niece you can come in and clean up the mess the plumber made on my floor. It isn't the place of the girl I pay wages to, to clean up the dirt the workmen make."

"Isn't it?" Mary Rose did not know and she followed Mrs. Schuneman into the living-room. "What a pleasant room," she said, when she crossed the threshold, for the sun streamed in

through the windows in a way that made even a rather garish decoration seem attractive.

Mrs. Schuneman's grim face relaxed a trifle. "It ought to be pretty," she grumbled. "It cost enough but it don't suit Louise. And Lottie don't like the rug. She says it's too red. But I like red," she snapped. "It's a thankless task to try and please girls who think they know more than their old mother."

"There is a lot of red in it." Mary Rose had to admit that much. "But red is a cheerful color. It makes you feel very warm and comfortable."

"It isn't cheerful to my girls. They won't stay at home, always away, and their old mother left alone. When they were little I gave them all the time I could spare from my work and now they leave me by myself. They think because I have a girl to cook and wash I don't need them."

Mary Rose did not understand and she stood there, just beyond the threshold, uncertainly. But if she did not understand why Mrs. Schuneman's daughters did not stay in the room with the red rug, she realized that Mrs. Schuneman was lonely.

"It's too bad you haven't a pet," she suggested.

"A dog or a cat is a lot of company. Why—" a sudden thought came to her. "Just wait a minute. I'll be right back," she called as she ran out of the room.

Before Mrs. Schuneman fairly realized that she had gone she was back with Jenny Lind in her cage.

"I thought perhaps you might like to have Jenny Lind spend the day with you," she said breathlessly. "She isn't just the same as a grown up daughter, but she's lots of company and she sings—she sings," she was rather at a loss to tell how well Jenny Lind could sing, "like a seraphim! They sing in the Bible and sound so grand I've always wanted to hear one though I know there isn't a seraphim that could sing sweeter than Jenny Lind. You can put the cage in that window. She loves the sunshine and she'll sing and sing until you forget you are lonely."

"My gracious me!" murmured Mrs. Schuneman, staring from the eager face to the sleek yellow bird. "I haven't had a canary since I was a girl in my father's house."

"Uncle Larry said the law doesn't say you

can't have birds here. It's cats and dogs and children."

"Yes, yes. I know." Mrs. Schuneman walked up to the cage and looked at Jenny Lind, who looked at her with her bright bead-like eyes before she burst into joyous song. "Now, why didn't I think of a canary?" Mrs. Schuneman demanded sharply. "There isn't any reason why I shouldn't have one."

"You're perfectly welcome to Jenny Lind until you get one of your own." Mary Rose was delighted to have Jenny Lind received so cordially. "She'll be glad to spend the day with you. She's a very friendly bird."

"I'll be glad to have her. Perhaps you'll stay, too." Mrs. Schuneman surprised herself more than she did Mary Rose by the invitation that popped so suddenly from her mouth. She had never asked anyone in the Washington to spend the day with her before. "Tell me where you came from and what's your name and how old you are?"

"I came from Mifflin and my name's Mary Rose Crocker and I'm almost el—I mean I'm go-

ing on fourteen." She remembered the secret she had with Aunt Kate just in time. A second more and it would have been too late.

Mrs. Schuneman regarded her over the gold spectacles. "Going on fourteen?" she repeated. "You're very small for your age. Why, when my Lottie was fourteen she would have made two of you."

Mary Rose squirmed. The unjust criticism was very hard to bear. She just had to murmur faintly that it would be some time before she would reach fourteen.

"H-m, I thought so." Mrs. Schuneman looked very wise, as if she understood perfectly and there is no doubt that she understood more than Mary Rose. "Well, well," she said, while Mary Rose, scarlet and mortified, stood twisting the corner of Aunt Kate's apron.

"I—I hope you won't tell," she said hurriedly, her eyes on the red rug, "because it's something of a secret on account of the law for this house. I don't understand exactly but Aunt Kate does."

"I've no doubt she does." The corners of Mrs. Schuneman's mouth were pulled down farther

than they had been and she looked very, very stern until Jenny Lind broke into joyous song again, when the corners of Mrs. Schuneman's mouth tilted up, slightly. "Well, well," she said again, but not quite so crossly. "So long as you behave yourself and aren't a nuisance I shan't say a word. Where I lived before my brother left me his money there were more children than a body could count. Such a noise and confusion all the time. I was glad to get away from them and come up here where there couldn't be any children——"

"Nor any dogs nor cats," murmured Mary Rose sadly.

"But maybe that's why the place hasn't seemed like home to me."

"Of course it is." Mary Rose knew. "I never heard of a home without children. There wasn't one in all Mifflin." She tried to imagine such a thing but she couldn't do it. "It wouldn't be a home," she decided emphatically.

Mrs. Schuneman regarded her curiously before she gave herself another surprise. "Suppose you go and ask your aunt if you can go out with me

and find a bird? I believe you would choose a good one. Louise and Lottie can make a fuss if they want to but I never said a word when they bought a phonograph and a bird will be more company for an old lady than a machine."

They had a wonderful time finding a canary. They visited several shops where birds of many kinds were offered for sale. Mary Rose quite lost her heart to a great red and green poll parrot with fierce red-rimmed eyes.

"You'd never be lonesome if you had him," she whispered. "He could really talk to you."

"Damn! Damn! Damn!" remarked Poll Parrot pleasantly, as if to show that he really could talk. "Polly wants a cracker. Oh, damn! Damn! Fools and idiots! Damn!"

"It isn't conversation I care for. It's too much like having a man around again." Mrs. Schuneman was quite shocked.

After they had made their choice and had a bird in a neat little wooden cage and had bought a fine brass cage for a permanent home they stopped at a confectioner's for a sundae. Mary Rose's cheeks were as pink as pink as they sat

at the little table and ate ice cream and discussed a name for the new member of the Schuneman family. They finally agreed on Germania in deference to Mrs. Schuneman's love for her native country and Mary Rose's firm belief that a bird's name should be suggestive of music. "And I've heard that lots of music was made in Germany," she said.

Altogether it was a very pleasant afternoon and they went back to the Washington very happily. Mrs. Schuneman carried Germania in the temporary wooden cage and Mary Rose proudly bore the brass cage. As they went up the steps a man brushed past them. He was tall and thin and had a nervous irritable manner that one felt as well as saw. Mary Rose looked up and smiled politely.

"Good afternoon," she said.

The tall thin man did not answer her. He did not even look at her but hurried on up the stairs.

"That's Mr. Wells," Mrs. Schuneman explained in a hoarse whisper that must have followed Mr. Wells up the stairs and caught him at the first landing. "He's an awful grouch. He's

over the Brackens, but if Lottie is entertaining one of her bridge clubs and he's at home he's sure to send his Jap man down to ask her to make less noise. I've never spoken to him in my life. I don't see how you dared."

"I always spoke to people in Mifflin." Mary Rose couldn't understand why she shouldn't speak to people in Waloo.

"Folks don't speak to folks in Waloo unless they've been introduced," Mrs. Schuneman told her gloomily. "The good God knows I've had to learn that. And you're too young to know good from bad," she began, as Aunt Kate had, but Mary Rose interrupted her to explain that she could, that she had the right kind of an eye, and she tried to tell her what the right kind of an eye was.

"You look through your heart with it," vaguely. "I don't understand just how for your eyes are here," she touched her face, "and your heart's here," and her hand tapped her small chest. "But that's what daddy said. He called it the friendly eye. Being friendly to people, he said, was as if you had a candle in your heart and the light

shines through your eyes. Oh, Mrs. Schuneman, I do believe Germania is going to like it here." For Germania was twittering as if she did find her new home to her liking.

They had scarcely transferred Germania from the wooden cage to the shining brass one and hung it in the window when Miss Lottie Schuneman came in. Mary Rose looked at her eagerly. Could she be the enchanted princess Mr. Jerry had spoken of? But Miss Lottie was short and plump like her mother and her face was round and rosy. She did not bear the faintest resemblance to any princess Mary Rose had ever read of. It was disappointing.

"What have you there?" Miss Lottie asked at once. "You can't have pets in this flat, you know."

"You can have canary birds," Mary Rose told her quickly. "Uncle Larry said the law never spoke of them."

"Uncle Larry said that, did he?" Miss Lottie began but her mother broke in with an eagerness that was very different from the querulous way in which she usually spoke:

"I've got to have something alive here to keep me company. You don't know how lonesome it is for a woman to have nothing to do when she's been as busy as I was. There isn't anyone for me to talk to but Mina, and she's paid to work, not to listen. You and Louise bought a phonograph. I guess I can have a bird if I want one."

"My word!" Miss Lottie put her hands on her hips and stared at her mother. She laughed softly, indulgently. "Sure, you can have a bird if you want one. But don't let it wake me up mornings."

"Wouldn't you just as soon be wakened by a bird singing as a steam radiator sizzling?" asked Mary Rose. "Unless you live all by yourself on a desert island you've got to be wakened by some kind of a noise. I think a bird singing is just about the most beautiful noise that ever was."

"So do I," agreed Mrs. Schuneman. "And you needn't worry, Lottie Schuneman. I don't complain of your phonograph nights, I leave that to Mr. Wells, and you needn't find fault with my bird mornings."

"I'm not finding fault, far be it from me; only

when Mr. Wells sends down word that your new pet is a nuisance you can answer him yourself."

"How could anyone say a bird was a nuisance?" Mary Rose was shocked. "Why, it can't be that late!" for the clock on the mantel called out five times and she looked at it in wide-eyed amazement. Never had an afternoon run away any faster. "I must go. I've had a perfectly wonderful time, Mrs. Schuneman, and I hope that Germania will be happy with you in her new home."

There was a wistful note in her voice that reminded Mrs. Schuneman that Mary Rose had recently come to a new home. She patted Mary Rose on the shoulder and told her to come again.

"Come whenever you like. I'm alone most of the time and you can be free with me," meaningly. "My tongue isn't hung in the middle to wag at both ends."

"You can't have a kid running in and out all the time," objected Miss Lottie, when Mary Rose had gone.

Mrs. Schuneman stopped snapping her fingers at Germania and looked at her daughter. "There

isn't much about this house that you let me have as I want it. You took me away from my old friends and brought me up here where it's so stylish I don't know a soul. I wonder I haven't lost my voice, I've so little chance to use it. We've been here for seven months now and though there's dozens and dozens of people pass my door every night and morning, there's not one of them ever stops. The janitor and his wife are the only ones I can talk to and I have to find fault to get them up here. You and Louise are out all day. You don't stay here."

"You don't have to stay here, either," yawned Miss Lottie. She had heard all that before, very, very often. "We've told you a million times to go out."

"Where'll I go?" asked her mother sharply. "Where'll I go? I can't run about the streets and the stores six days in the week. A woman's got to be home some time and if I find that child amuses me I'm going to have her here when I want her. You needn't say another word, Lottie Schuneman. So long as I pay the bills I'll have something to say about my own house."

"I was only telling you the kid might be a nuisance," muttered Miss Lottie.

"And I was telling you I'd do as you do, choose my own friends. That child's the only soul that has ever looked at me in a friendly way since I came to this house and I'm going to see her when I want to."

Mrs. Donovan could scarcely believe her ears when Mary Rose poured out the story of the afternoon.

"Old Lady Schuneman's been crosser than two sticks ever since she came here. Maybe it is because she's lonesome, I dunno. Seems if a canary won't do much for her but, for the land's sakes, Mary Rose, don't put one in every flat."

"Wouldn't that be grand!" Mary Rose stopped paring potatoes for supper to look at her aunt with admiration. "It would be like living inside an organ, wouldn't it. I think it would be perfectly lovely."

CHAPTER VI

WHEN Mary Rose went up to Mrs. Bracken's the next morning she took Jenny Lind with her and placed the cage on the kitchen table.

"I can't bear to be alone," she had explained to Aunt Kate. "If I don't have a friend with me I feel as if I was shut up in a dark closet."

First Mary Rose went into the big living-room and picked up papers, straightened the chairs and raised the shades as she had seen her aunt do the day before. It was a very splendid room to Mary Rose but there was something about it that made her frown as she stood in the doorway.

"It needs something. Even the chairs don't look as if they really knew each other. It doesn't feel as if people ever had a good time in it." She shook her head and thought of the shabby sitting-room in Mifflin—not big enough to swing a cat

in, daddy had said—where she and daddy and Jenny Lind and George Washington and Solomon and Lena had been crowded together. Everyone had had good times there.

She winked back a tear as she went down the hall. She glanced in at an open door and stopped short as she found that she was looking into the black eyes of a woman on the bed.

"Are you Mrs. Donovan's niece?" the woman said faintly. "Come in. Gracious, but you're small for your age! You washed up very nicely yesterday. I didn't close my eyes last night and I'm not feeling well today, so I'm not going to get up for a while. I wish you would tell your uncle that Mrs. Matchan can't practice this morning. I must get some sleep. What's that in the kitchen?" she demanded as she heard a happy chirp-chirp.

"That's Jenny Lind." Mary Rose was all sympathy for this lovely lady who could not sleep. For a moment she had thought that she might be the enchanted princess but if she was Mrs. Bracken she was a married lady and Mary Rose had never heard of a married princess. All the

princesses she knew ceased to exist when they began to live happily ever after.

"Jenny Lind?" asked Mrs. Bracken.

"My canary. I brought her for company. I never was in a house by myself and it's lonely if you're only going on fourteen," faltered Mary Rose, fully conscious that Mrs. Bracken did not care for canaries.

"Well, I can't have her in my kitchen. She makes me nervous. Put her out in the hall and shut the bedroom door. When you have washed the dishes I may let you make a cup of tea." And she closed the black eyes which had looked at Mary Rose in such a chilly way.

Mary Rose went out on tiptoe. She meant to close the door softly but she was so indignant that it would slam. Put her Jenny Lind out in the hall where cats could get her? She would not. Even if cats were forbidden to enter the Washington some cat might not know the law and slip in. She would take no risk. She nodded encouragingly at the bird as she looked about the kitchen. Near the sink was an open cupboard with three shelves, broad and high enough to hold

a birdcage. She would put the cage on the lowest shelf and then if Mrs. Bracken came out, she would push the door shut.

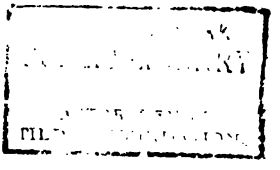
"You'd better go to sleep too, Jenny Lind," she cautioned in a low voice. "The lady doesn't like you. She thinks you're noisy." She did not tell Jenny Lind what she thought of the lady, but shut her lips firmly and began her work. She did not sing that morning. She did not even look up to smile and nod to Jenny Lind, but kept her eyes on her dishes, her lips pressed into an indignant red button.

Suddenly there was a whir—a rattle—and she did look up to see that the cupboard had vanished. Shelves and birdcage had all disappeared. Nothing was left but a vacant space and an open door. Mary Rose dropped the dish she held. Fortunately it was a kitchen bowl, but it would have been the same if it had been one of the best cups.

"Why—why!" gasped Mary Rose. She tried to put her head in the space where the shelves had been to see where Jenny Lind had gone.

"Jenny Lind!" she shrieked suddenly. She could not help it. If your pet canary was sud-

"Shelves and birdcage had all disappeared."



denly snatched from you by some mysterious power, I rather fancy you would shriek, too. "Jenny Lind!"

The crash of the kitchen bowl or Mary Rose's astonished shriek brought Mrs. Bracken from her bed. She stood in the doorway, one hand clutching the kimono she had thrown around her.

"You must be more quiet," she said crossly. "How can I sleep when you are making such a noise? And if you break any more dishes I shall have to charge you for them. It's pure carelessness."

"It's Jenny Lind," gulped Mary Rose, too frightened to think of dishes. And she tried to make Mrs. Bracken understand that Jenny Lind had been there, in that hole in the wall, and that now—Oh, where was she?

Mrs. Bracken shrugged her shoulders. "It's the dumbwaiter," she yawned. "Your bird has gone up to Mr. Wells or possibly higher. If it's Mr. Wells I don't suppose you'll see the bird again. He's a very peculiar man."

Mary Rose did not wait to hear another word. With Aunt Kate's big blue and white checked

apron on, the dish mop in her hand, and a great fear in her heart, she dashed up the stairs and pounded on the door of the apartment above. Mr. Wells came himself and if he had looked cross and forbidding the night before he looked a thousand times crosser and more forbidding now. Indeed, he exactly fulfilled Mary Rose's idea of an ogre.

"Please don't hurt Jenny Lind," sobbed Mary Rose, as soon as she could gather breath to speak. "I'll take her right away."

"Hurt who? Who's Jenny Lind?" growled the ogre.

"My bird! my Jenny Lind! She came up to your house with a dumbwaiter." Mary Rose hadn't the faintest idea of what a dumbwaiter was and it sounded horrible to her. "Please, please, give her to me at once!" She fairly danced in her impatience. She would have rushed into the apartment but Mr. Wells stood in the doorway.

"The dumbwaiter?" Mary Rose had never heard a more unfriendly voice. He called to someone behind him and a Japanese man came

and peered under Mr. Wells' arm as he held it against the frame of the door.

"Sako has taken nothing from the dumbwaiter this morning," Mr. Wells said very coldly after he had exchanged a few words with his servant. "But if you have lost your bird it is only what you must expect. Pets are not allowed in this house." And he scowled fiercely enough to frighten anyone but the owner of a lost canary.

"They are if they're not children nor cats nor dogs," insisted tearful Mary Rose. "Uncle Larry said the law never says one word about birds. Oh, are you quite sure Jenny Lind isn't in your house?" she wailed.

"I told you we have taken nothing from the dumbwaiter," impatiently. He thought he was wonderfully patient with the child. He could have ordered her out of the building at once. "Your bird may have gone up to the next floor."

"Perhaps she has." Mary Rose was on the stairs before he finished the sentence. "I'm sorry for bothering you," she called back, "but if one of your family was lost I rather think you'd try to find her."

Her voice rang out shrill and clear and it was such an unexpected sound in the Washington, where children's voices were forbidden, that old Mrs. Johnson opened her door in a spasm of curiosity. She closed it abruptly when she met the cold unfriendly glance of Mr. Wells' black eyes, and shook in her shoes.

Four doors faced Mary Rose when she reached the third floor. She knocked on all of them not to waste time. Two doors remained firmly closed. The other two opened simultaneously. In one stood a girl with yellow hair and blue eyes and in the other was a young man who promptly changed the morose expression he had put on when he rose for a pleasanter one as he glanced across at Miss Blanche Carter before he even looked at Mary Rose. Miss Carter looked at Mary Rose first and then at Mr. Robert Strahan.

"Oh, please," Mary Rose was almost, if not quite, in tears, "have you seen Jenny Lind?"

They stared at her. The only Jenny Lind they had ever heard of had been quietly in her grave for many years. They looked at each other. Mr. Strahan added a satisfied grin to his pleasant ex-

pression, for he had wished to know Miss Carter ever since he had met her on the stairs the day after he had moved into the Washington, but Fate had refused to bring them together. He determined to make the most of this rare opportunity as he kindly questioned Mary Rose.

"Who is Jenny Lind?"

"My canary," sobbed Mary Rose. "I put her on the shelf in Mrs. Bracken's kitchen and she —she disappeared!"

"Cats," suggested Mr. Strahan with a very knowing glance for Miss Carter.

Mary Rose shook her head. "Cats aren't allowed here. It was a dumbwaiter, Mrs. Bracken said." Her voice was filled with anguish. How hateful city life was!

"Oh! I thought it was the milkman." Miss Carter turned and ran into her flat, Mary Rose at her heels. After a moment's hesitation, in which he called himself a bashful idiot, Mr. Strahan deserted his doorway for his neighbor's.

On the top shelf of a cupboard like that which had been in Mrs. Bracken's kitchen Mary Rose saw a bottle of milk. She groaned. But Miss

Carter gave a pull somewhere and sent it higher. There on the lower shelf, swinging unconcernedly in her cage, was Jenny Lind. Mary Rose gave a joyous shriek.

"I thought I'd never see her again. I can't thank you, but I'll remember you as long as I live. I—I feel as if you'd saved her life." She shivered as she remembered the snap of Mr. Wells' black eyes, the click of his heavy jaw, when he had said that pets were not allowed in the building.

"What is all this excitement?" questioned a soft voice behind them, and Mary Rose whirled around and stared at another girl.

Now that her anxiety in regard to Jenny Lind was relieved, Mary Rose had time to think of other things. She brushed the tears from her eyes, and her face was wreathed with a dewy smile as she asked eagerly:

"Please, which—which of you is the enchanted princess?" One of them must be. She knew it by a funny prickle down her back.

Both girls laughed, the yellow-haired one and the brown.

"Princesses aren't enchanted now." Miss Carter pulled a lock of Mary Rose's yellow hair. "They have their eyes too wide open."

"But Mr. Jerry said there was, that in this very house was a most beautiful princess who was under the spell of a wicked witch. He said the old witch's name was Independence." Her words fairly ran over each other, she was so afraid something would happen before she could deliver Mr. Jerry's message to the princess. "And he said to tell the princess that the prince wasn't ever going to Jericho, but was going to stay right here on the job."

Miss Carter looked significantly at the brown-haired girl. "That message isn't for me," she told Mary Rose. "Independence and I are strangers. I can't bear the thing. I quite agree with Mr. Jerry that she is an old witch. Isn't someone a picture, Bess," she asked, "with her birdcage and checked apron?"

"She surely is." The impatient frown that had marred Miss Thorley's face at the mere mention of Mr. Jerry's name slipped away. "I must paint her. She'll make a fine ad. Who are you, honey?"

And Mary Rose told them who she was and how she had come from Mifflin to make her home with Aunt Kate and Uncle Larry in the cellar-basement, she meant; and how she had had to board out George Washington and had taken Jenny Lind to Mrs. Bracken's for company while she earned money to pay for George Washington's board.

"By jinks, what a jolly story," murmured Mr. Strahan who still clung to his neighbor's doorway and his opportunity. The two girls looked at him and the three smiled involuntarily.

"I must go back and finish the dishes," Mary Rose announced suddenly. "Mrs. Bracken won't like it if I stay away any longer. I'm sorry I bothered you," she smiled tremulously. "But I just had to find Jenny Lind. Thank you for your trouble. Good-by."

"Come and see us again?" The invitation came in a chorus.

Mary Rose stopped abruptly. "Is that an honest and true invitation?" she asked doubtfully. "Aunt Kate said I mustn't ever be a nuisance to the tenements because children aren't allowed

here. I'm not a child, she said, because I'm going on fourteen, but I had to promise to be careful of the tenements."

"Bless the baby," murmured Miss Carter as she and Mr. Strahan stood in the hall and watched Mary Rose's head go down, down.

"I thought children were barred?" asked Mr. Strahan quickly, he was so afraid that Miss Carter would disappear also.

"I thought pets were barred, too. She's a quaint little thing. I suppose she is homesick. A city apartment house is not like a home in a small town," she said, as if she knew, and she sighed.

"It is not!" He agreed with her emphatically. He had come from a small town himself and he knew. "I think I'll make a little story out of this. I'm a newspaper man, you know, and there isn't anything a city editor likes better than he does a human interest story. I have a hunch that there is a lot of human interest in that kid."

"I fancy you are right. I'm a librarian myself, and I should be at my library this blessed moment. I'd far rather go down and help Mary Rose,"

and she laughed scornfully because she had such simple tastes.

He looked as if he admired them. "If you feel that way you surely aren't under the spell of that wicked witch Independence that Mary Rose talks of." There was nothing scornful in his laugh. It held so little scorn and so much admiration that she flushed.

"Independence!" she shrugged her shoulders. "I learned long ago that independence is just another word for loneliness. My friend, Miss Thorley, doesn't agree with me. We have very warm arguments over it."

"They haven't been warm enough to disturb me. You're very quiet neighbors. Doesn't the very quiet get on your nerves sometimes? It's something just to hear people, when you are alone and have no one to talk to."

"Lonely! You?" She was astonished. "I don't see how a young man could be lonely." Evidently her idea of masculine life was a merry round of social pleasure.

His laugh was a trifle bitter. "A man can be lonely for exactly the same reason a girl can,"

he asserted. "I've lived here for three months, and this is the first time I've spoken to you."

The color deepened in her cheeks. "I suppose I shouldn't be talking to you now but—Mary Rose—and we are neighbors. One does get so suspicious living with suspicious people," apologetically.

"Please don't be suspicious of me. I'm the most harmless man in Waloo. I'm too busy hanging on to my job to be dangerous. I propose a vote of thanks to Mary Rose for bringing us together. All in favor say aye. The ayes have it." He held out his hand.

She laughed consciously, but after a second she gave him her fingers. "It is pleasant to be able to speak to one's neighbors," she admitted with a hint of formality that in some way pleased Mr. Strahan.

Mary Rose stopped at Mr. Wells' door as she went downstairs. It would be but friendly to tell him that Jenny Lind was found, he must be anxious. But she hesitated before she rapped on the door, very gently this time.

Mr. Wells had not lost any of his grimness

when he opened it. He had on his hat and he looked to Mary Rose's startled eyes as tall as the steeple of the Presbyterian Church in Mifflin.

"Well, what now?" he snapped.

Mary Rose caught her breath. "I thought you would like to know that Jenny Lind is safe." She lifted the cage so that he could see for himself how safe and comfortable Jenny Lind was. "She was on the lowest shelf of the dumbwaiter. The enchanted princess's milk bottle was on the top shelf." And she chuckled. Now that she was no longer frightened, Jenny Lind's adventure seemed a joke.

It was not a joke to Mr. Wells. "A city apartment house is no place for pets—or children," he said and shut the door.

Mary Rose stared at the mahogany panels. "Crosspatch," she whispered. And then she said it louder, "Crosspatch!"

The door opened as if by magic and Mr. Wells came out and shut it behind him.

"Did you say anything?" he asked coldly.

Mary Rose was too startled and too honest not to tell the truth.

"I said crosspatch," she faltered and waited bravely for the deluge.

The two looked at each other. The tall man with the nervous, irritable face and the little girl with the birdcage in her hand. She did not say that she had called him a crosspatch, and kindly Discretion whispered in Mr. Wells' ear that it would be wise to leave well enough alone. Without another word he stalked by Mary Rose down the stairs.

Mary Rose followed meekly. "It's a lucky thing, Jenny Lind, that you were not on his dumbwaiter. He's not what I call a very friendly man," she murmured.

She told Mr. Jerry all about it that afternoon when she ran over to see how George Washington was doing as a boarder. Mr. Jerry watched her curiously.

"Poor little kid," he thought. "She's up against it for fair with a cold-blooded bunch like that." He was very sympathetic and kind and quite enthusiastic over his new boarder. He cheered Mary Rose amazingly and lifted her to the seventh heaven of delight when he suggested

that she should ride downtown with him in the automobile when he went for his Aunt Mary.

"You may take Jenny Lind and George Washington with you," he was good enough to say.

Mary Rose's dancing feet moved in a more sedate measure. "I think Jenny Lind has had ride enough for one day. And George Washington likes his four feet better than he does an automobile. He won't mind if we leave him behind."

"Then you may sit on the front seat with me," Mr. Jerry promised.

"It's very exciting living in the city," sighed Mary Rose, when she was on the front seat beside him. "I've been here only three days and see all that's happened. Oh, there's the lady who found Jenny Lind—and the enchanted princess, too!" she cried as they passed Miss Thorley and Miss Carter. "Isn't that the enchanted princess, Mr. Jerry?" She twisted around so that she could look into his face. He colored and his eyes seemed to darken as he spoke to the two girls. Miss Thorley nodded curtly, but Miss Carter waved a friendly hand. "My," sighed Mary Rose, "if I

were a prince I wouldn't let any old witch Independence keep her enchanted."

"I wonder how you would prevent it," muttered Mr. Jerry under his breath. "Saying and doing, Mary Rose, are two very separate and distinct things."

"I know." Mary Rose felt quite capable of discussing the subject. "Mr. Mann, the Presbyterian minister in Mifflin, preached a whole sermon about that. He said the Lord didn't ever give you what you want right off quick. You had to work for it, and the more precious it was the harder you had to work. I should think that a beautiful princess would be the most precious thing a prince could work for, shouldn't you?"

Mr. Jerry took his hand from the wheel to squeeze Mary Rose's brown fingers. "I should!" he said solemnly. "I do, Mary Rose, I do!"

CHAPTER VII

STRANGE as the Washington seemed to Mary Rose, it was not very different from any other large city apartment house where people lived side by side for months, for years, sometimes, without becoming acquainted. It was not worth while, some said; neighbors change too often. You don't know who people are, others thought. In such close quarters one cannot afford to know undesirable people. The advantage of an apartment house is that you don't have to know your neighbors, murmured a third group. Consequently the tenants came and went and one could count on a hand and have fingers to spare, the few who exchanged greetings when they met on the stairs.

This was an appalling state of affairs to country-bred Mary Rose, who had been brought up in a friendly atmosphere. In Mifflin everyone knew everyone and was interested in what happened.

When joy came to a neighbor there was general rejoicing, and when sorrow touched a family there was a universal sympathy, while the little between pleasures and perplexities lost nothing and gained considerably by the knowledge that they were shared with others. Mary Rose was intensely interested in this new phase of life, if she could not understand it. It amazed her when she counted how many people were over her small head.

"In Mifflin I didn't have anyone but God and the angels," she told Aunt Kate, "but here there's the Schunemans and the Rawsons and the Blakes and Mr. Jarvis and Miss Adams and Mrs. Matchan and Miss Proctor and Mr. Wilcox and his friend. In Mifflin we lived side by side, you know, and not up and down. We ought all to be friends when we live so close together, shouldn't we?" wistfully.

Aunt Kate tried her best to tell her that they were all friends, but she couldn't do it.

"What's the good of tellin' her folks are friendly when they don't look friendly? Seems if a body can't frown with her face an' smile with her

heart at the same time. An' frowns are just as catchin' as germs. You naturally don't pat a growlin' dog an' so you don't smile at a frownin' person. I've al'ys seen more frowns 'n smiles in the Washington."

But Mary Rose did her best to make friends, because that was what she had done always and because that was the only way she knew how to live. And one by one her unconscious little efforts to unlock the gates of reserve that suspicion and indifference and consciousness had placed over the hearts and lips of the people she was thrown with began to make some impression.

Even Mrs. Willoughby, who had wept ever since her mother died, smiled when she saw the little girl in the checked apron that was so much too big for her, with her birdcage in her hand, and forgot to complain of the unusual noise in the hall. Mary Rose smiled, too, and when Mrs. Willoughby spoke of Jenny Lind, Mary Rose offered to loan her bird.

"She'll make you feel happier," she said. "She did me, when my daddy went to be with my little mother in Heaven. Jenny Lind can't talk," she

admitted regretfully, "but she can sing and she's —she's *so* friendly!"

And Mr. Willoughby came down that very night and thanked the Donovans for the loan of Jenny Lind and for what Mary Rose had said and done. Larry Donovan and his wife looked at each other after he had gone. It was not often that they were thanked by a tenant.

Miss Adams would have died before she would have confessed to anyone but Mary Rose that she hated Waloo, she hated the Washington. Mary Rose looked at her with wide open eyes, too astonished to be shocked that anyone could hate a world that was as beautiful and as full of wonderful surprises as Mary Rose found this world to be.

"I don't see how you can be lonesome when there are people above you and below you and in front of you and behind you and right across from you. Why, you're almost entirely surrounded by neighbors," she cried, as if Miss Adams could not be almost entirely surrounded by anything more desirable. "There are almost as many people in this house as there are in the Pres-

byterian Church in Mifflin and no one was ever lonely there except on week days. Don't you like your neighbors?"

"I don't know them," confessed Miss Adams, mournfully.

"You don't know the people who live right next door to you!" Mary Rose had never heard of such a situation. "Why, when the Jenkses moved from Prairieville Mrs. Mullins, who'd never set eyes on one of them before, took over a pan of hot gingerbread so she could get acquainted right away. Of course the people here are all moved in, but you could borrow an egg or a cup of molasses, couldn't you? And take it back right away. That would give you two excuses to call."

"I couldn't do that." Miss Adams shivered at the mere thought. "It isn't that I care to know any of them, Mary Rose, only—it makes me so mad that I don't!" with a sudden burst of honesty.

"Couldn't you ask about a pattern or what to do for a cold in the head or how to get red ants off of a plant? But you haven't any plants. Wouldn't you feel more friendly if you had a

beautiful pink geranium growing in your window?"

"There isn't sun enough in this flat to keep a geranium alive," grumbled Miss Adams, who seemed determined to be lonely and faultfinding.

Mary Rose sighed. "Of course, no one can have the sun all the time," she said gently, as if to excuse old Sol for not lingering longer in Miss Adams' small apartment. "I'll let you have Jenny Lind for a while tomorrow," she suggested after a moment of frowning thought. "She'll cheer you up."

Miss Adams wanted to refuse to be cheered by Jenny Lind, but she had not the courage, and when Mary Rose brought the bird the next morning she brought also a small glass dish filled with pebbles on which rested a little green bulb.

"Inside it is a Japanese lily," she said, and there was both pride and awe in her voice. "Don't you wonder how God ever folded it up in such a small package? Mr. Jerry's Aunt Mary was going to throw it away. She said it was too late, that it ought to have been planted months ago, but I said wouldn't she please give it a chance.

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My daddy used to say that was all people needed, just a chance. Mrs. Mullins had one in Mifflin, I mean a lily, and it didn't need hardly any sun. It just grew and grew. You can sit beside it in the window and pretend you're a Japanese queen. Don't you think it's fun to pretend? And imagine? It's almost the same as having everything you want. I've imagined I was a queen on a throne and the whale that swallowed Jonah—he must have been so surprised—and a circus rider and an angel with a harp and a pussy willow. I don't know which I liked the best. It helps a lot when things go wrong to imagine they're right. You'll like to see the Japanese lily come out of its bulb, won't you?"

Miss Adams was polite enough to say she would, although she frowned at the glass dish as she set it in the window. If Mary Rose had seen as much of the world as she had, she wouldn't think that to imagine a thing was the same as having it.

"I'll tell Mr. Jerry's Aunt Mary you're much obliged," Mary Rose suggested when she left.

Another day Miss Proctor found her leaning

against the door of the apartment she shared with Mrs. Matchan, listening entranced to the music that Mrs. Matchan was making with her ten fingers and her piano.

"Isn't it beautiful?" Mary Rose looked up with shining eyes, not at all abashed at being discovered listening. "It's better than any circus band I ever heard. It's like Jenny Lind when the sun is shining and she has had a leaf of fresh lettuce. It makes me feel in my heart like soda water feels in my nose, all prickly and light," vaguely. "It's—it's wonderful! Take this place," she moved generously away from the crack that Miss Proctor might put her ear to it. "You can hear better. When I grow up I want to play just like that." Mary Rose always wanted to do what other people could do.

"Do you?" Miss Proctor looked at her and forgot that she had considered children unmitigated nuisances. She actually opened the door. "Come in," she said, "and tell Mrs. Matchan that you like her music."

And the result of Mary Rose's attempt to put in words the feeling she had in her heart that

was like soda water in her nose, was that Mrs. Matchan went down to the Donovans' and asked if she might be permitted—permitted—to give Mary Rose music lessons.

"You could have knocked me down with the pin feather of a chicken," Aunt Kate told Uncle Larry. "I supposed, of course, she'd come tearin' down to find fault with Mrs. Rawson for runnin' her sewin' machine last night an' I was all ready to tell her that each of us has some rights, but no, it was to offer to give Mary Rose lessons on her piano. She says the child's got talent an' feelin' an' she'd like to see how she'd express them. She had to tell me twice before I could take it in. It isn't often that folks come down here to give a favor. Seems if they only find the way when they want to complain. I never knew Mrs. Matchan to do anythin' for anybody before an' we've lived under the same roof for most two years now."

She had another surprise when Bob Strahan tramped down the basement stairs with a big box of Annie Keller chocolates under his arm. He solemnly presented the candy to Mary Rose.

"In payment of a debt," he explained gravely when Aunt Kate and Uncle Larry stared and Mary Rose giggled. "She helped me with a very important bit of work," he added, although the addition did not make the matter any clearer to the Donovans nor to Mary Rose.

"You bet she helped me," he told Miss Carter when he went up and met her in the lower hall. They had encountered each other on the stairs several times since the day of Jenny Lind's adventure and had made the amazing discovery that they had formerly lived within fifteen miles of each other and had many mutual friends. "If it hadn't been for Mary Rose, I wouldn't be on the staff of the Waloo *Gazette* today. They're cutting off heads down there, and I'm sure mine was slated to go, but the chief's strong for human interest stuff, especially kid stuff. He says that every living being, however hard his outside shell is now, was once a kid, and sometime the kid stuff will get to him for the sake of old times. Mary Rose and the cat she's boarding out saved my neck and I'm still a man with a job."

"That's splendid." Miss Carter tried to speak

with enthusiasm, but she could not look enthusiastic. She was tired and discontented with life; all the sparkle had gone out of her face.

Bob Strahan saw it and was sorry. "Say," he said impulsively. "I've two tickets for a show in my pocket this minute. You've known me over forty-eight hours. Is that long enough to make it proper for you to go with me? I'll give you the names of the banker and the minister in my old home town and you can call them up on the long distance for references."

"The idea!" A bit of sparkle crept back into Miss Carter's face and she laughed. "Louis Blodgett's chum doesn't need any reference. Louis has told me quite a little about you," significantly. "It seems perfectly ridiculous that you were living right next door and I never knew it."

"And you might not know it now if it hadn't been for Mary Rose and that canary of hers. Gee! I'm glad I took her that box of chocolates."

CHAPTER VIII

WITH Jenny Lind's cage in her hand, Mary Rose knocked at Miss Thorley's door.

"We've come to have our pictures taken," she told Miss Carter, when she opened it. "The princess, I mean the other lady," she colored pinkly as Miss Carter laughed, "said we were to advertise Mr. Bingham Henderson's jam." Mary Rose always made a careful explanation. "If she would like two birds I'm almost sure that Mrs. Schuneman would loan her Germania."

"Do you want two birds, Bess?" called Miss Carter, and Miss Thorley came in.

She wore a faded blue smock over her crash gown and looked more beautiful than before to Mary Rose's admiring eyes.

"I think I have two birds," she laughed, and patted Mary Rose's head and snapped her fingers at Jenny Lind. "But don't tell me old Lady

Grouch is so human as to have a canary."

"Old Lady Grouch?" Mary Rose did not know whom she meant.

"Schuneman, is that her name?" absently. Miss Thorley was studying Mary Rose from behind half shut eyes. Just how should she pose her?

"Oh, but she isn't grouchy!" Mary Rose flew to the defense of her new friend. "She was just lonesome. Now that she has Germania for company, she is very, very pleasant. I go to see her every day."

Miss Thorley shrugged her shoulders. "Every one to their taste. Stand here, Mary Rose, so that the sun will fall on that yellow mop of yours. Would your heart break if I took off that hair ribbon? I'd rather your hair was loose."

"Aunt Kate put it there," doubtfully.

"I'll put it back before Aunt Kate sees you. Now, just hold Jenny Lind's cage under one arm and these under the other." She handed her a couple of blue and white jars, labeled with big letters—"Henderson-Bingham. Jam Manufacturers." "Can you hold another? Don't say yes if you can't, for it is tiresome to pose when

you're not used to it. Now then, how is that, Blanche? Isn't she ducky? You know it's moving day, Mary Rose, and you won't trust anyone but yourself to move what you like best, your bird and your jam."

"I just did move," proudly, "from Mifflin to Waloo."

"Exactly. Quaint, isn't she?" Miss Thorley murmured to Miss Carter. "How old are you, Mary Rose?"

Before Mary Rose could stammer that she was going on fourteen Miss Carter broke in to say that she was off.

"Be good to Mary Rose," she begged. "And, Mary Rose, when you are tired, say so. Miss Thorley will forget all about you when she is interested in the picture and she'll let you stand there until you drop. I know. You have a hard pose with your arms like that and when you are tired be sure and say so."

"Oh, run along, Blanche, and leave us alone," Miss Thorley said impatiently as she got her drawing board and brushes and sat down beside the little table that held her paints.

Miss Carter only waited to make a face at Mary Rose before she shut the door and left the artist and her model together. Neither spoke for a few moments. Mary Rose was too interested in watching Miss Thorley's wonderful fingers and Miss Thorley was too intent on her work for conversation. At last Mary Rose could keep still no longer.

"Are you really an enchanted princess?" she asked eagerly.

"I should scarcely call myself that, Mary Rose. A working woman is the way I say it."

"Then what did Mr. Jerry mean? Don't you think he is an awfully nice man? He makes me think of Alvin Lewis in Mifflin, only Alvin isn't quite so stylish. He is a clerk in the drug store in Mifflin and he was real pleasant. When Gladys and I only had a nickel he'd let us have a glass of ice cream soda with two spoons. He was such a pleasant man. But what did Mr. Jerry mean," she returned to her mutton with a suddenness that made Miss Thorley blur a line, "when he said you were under the spell of the wicked witch Independence?"

"How should I know?" And Miss Thorley frowned in a way that made Mary Rose wish she wouldn't. It quite spoiled her face to frown with it.

"What is Independence?" Mary Rose frowned, too. As Aunt Kate had said, frowns were contagious. Mary Rose had caught one now in a flash.

Miss Thorley took up a handful of brushes and regarded them intently before she said slowly: "Independence is the greatest thing in the world, Mary Rose. It means that I can live as I choose, where I choose, that I can pay my own bills, buy my own clothes and food, that I can do exactly as I please and as I think best. The independence of women is the most wonderful thing in this wonderful age."

Mary Rose looked puzzled. Mr. Jerry had not spoken of it as if it were such a wonderful thing. She looked around the pretty room with its simple furnishings and then at Miss Thorley.

"Does it mean you aren't ever going to be married?" she asked doubtfully. In Mifflin all the

girls as big as Miss Thorley meant to be married.

"It means exactly that." Miss Thorley's pretty lips were pressed closer together. "Work, Mary Rose, is the most important thing in life."

But Mary Rose was horrified. "Aren't you ever going to make a home for a family?" she cried. She couldn't believe that was what Miss Thorley meant and she dropped a jam jar. "You don't have to stop work to do it," she cried eagerly and helpfully after she had retrieved the jar. "Mrs. Evans, she's Gladys' mother, says she'd think the millennium was here if she didn't have any work to do. She has five children at home and three in the cemetery." Miss Thorley shuddered. "She can cook and sew and sweep and play the piano and she belongs to the Woman's Club and the Missionary Society and the Revolution Daughters and the Presbyterian Church. You don't ever have to stop working to make a home for a family," she repeated with a nod of encouragement to Miss Thorley who looked disgusted instead of pleased as Mary Rose had expected she would look.

"That isn't the kind of work I care for," and

she shrugged her shoulders. "I should think your Mrs. Evans would die."

"She hasn't time to die," Mary Rose told her seriously. "She's too busy taking care of Mr. Evans and her family and helping other people. She's a fine woman, everyone said in Mifflin. When I grow up I want to be just like her," emphatically.

"Oh, Mary Rose! You want to be something besides a drudge. Women have other things to do now but cook and sew and look after crying babies."

"Babies don't cry unless there's a pin sticking into them or they have the colic, and, anyway, I think babies are the dearest things God ever made. I'd like to have twelve when I grow up, six boys and six girls. I don't ever want an only child. It's too lonesome. Don't you ever get lonesome, Miss Thorley?"

"I have my work," Miss Thorley told her briefly.

Mary Rose watched her at her work. She admired Miss Thorley's swift, sure strokes, but she drew a sigh that came from the tips of her shabby

shoes as she murmured: "All the same I don't understand just what Mr. Jerry meant."

Miss Thorley did not answer, unless a frown could be considered an answer. She painted for perhaps five minutes longer, but her strokes were not so swift nor so sure. At last she threw down her brushes as if she hated herself for doing it, but realized she could do nothing else.

"Mary Rose," she said crossly. Even Mary Rose could see that she was not pleased with something. "I don't feel like painting today. It's too warm or something. If I could find a little girl about," she looked critically at Mary Rose, "about ten years old, I think I'd ask her to go out to the lake with me."

"Oh!" Mary Rose forgot that she was posing and dropped both jam jars. She almost dropped Jenny Lind, too. She remembered Aunt Kate's request as she clung to the cage. "Would one going on fourteen be too old?" Her voice trembled and her heart beat fast for fear Miss Thorley would say that was far too old. "If she should be a long, long time, perhaps three years, before she got to fourteen?"

Miss Thorley's face was as sober as a judge's as she considered this. "Well," she said at last very slowly, "one going on fourteen might do. Run and ask your aunt and I'll meet you downstairs."

Mary Rose obeyed after she had hugged Miss Thorley. "You're an angel," she exclaimed fervently, "a regular seraphim and cherubim angel, if you are independent."

She almost fell down the stairs and made such a racket that a door on the second floor opened promptly. Mary Rose caught her breath. She was afraid to see whose door was ajar. If that cross Mr. Wells should catch her she was afraid to think what he might do. But it was not Mr. Wells' door that had opened, nor Mr. Wells' face that looked at her. An elderly woman stood staring at her impatiently.

"Dearie me!" she was saying, "I thought the house was falling down."

"No, ma'am." Mary Rose was very apologetic. "I just stumbled a teeny bit. You see I'm in such a hurry because Miss Thorley's going to take me to the lake and I must carry Jenny

Lind downstairs and tell Aunt Kate and be at the front door in a jiffy." She would have darted on but the elderly lady put out a wrinkled hand and caught Mary Rose's blue and white checked apron.

"Who's Jenny Lind?" she demanded.

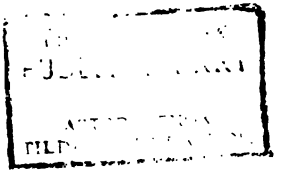
"This is Jenny Lind." Mary Rose held up the cage. "The best bird that ever had feathers. She came with me from Mifflin and Miss Thorley's painting our picture for Mr. Henderson Bingham."

The old lady looked at Jenny Lind in a strange way. "I haven't seen a canary bird for years," she murmured, more to herself than to Mary Rose.

Mary Rose answered her impulsively as she usually answered people. "Would you like to have her visit you until I come back? I'm not going to take her with us. She wouldn't be any trouble. She's used to visiting. All you have to do is to let her have a chair or a table to sit on." She offered the cage generously.

The old lady seemed to hesitate. She looked like Gladys' grandmother, only not so comfort-

"'I haven't seen a canary bird for years,' she murmured.'"



able, Mary Rose thought. At last she held out her hand.

"I declare I don't know but I will let you leave it with me. I'm all alone, and even a bird is company."

"Jenny Lind's splendid company. Shall I put her on the table for you? There! I'll run up before supper and get her. And don't you worry, because Uncle Larry said the law doesn't say one word about birds." And before startled Mother Johnson could ask her what she meant by the law, she ran off, stumbling down the two flights of stairs to the basement. Only the special Providence that looks after children saved her.

Aunt Kate was in the kitchen and she exclaimed in surprise when she heard that Mary Rose was going to the lake with Miss Thorley and had left Jenny Lind to spend the afternoon with the grandmother on the second floor.

"My soul an' body!" she said. "Whatever will you do next!"

Mary Rose saw Mr. Jerry in his car in the alley and ran to the open window to tell him of the pleasure that was in store for her.

"Mr. Jerry! Oh, Mr. Jerry! I'm going to the lake with the enchanted princess. Don't you wish you were me?"

Mr. Jerry waved his hand as he smiled and nodded, but Mary Rose did not wait to hear whether he would like to change places with her, for she had to slip out of the plaid skirt and middy blouse into a white frock that Aunt Kate had shortened.

"Isn't it the luckiest thing that Ella had so many beautiful clothes!" she said breathlessly. "I shouldn't want to go out with Miss Thorley in that horrid boys' suit."

She was ready first, and as she waited in the lower hall she talked to Mrs. Schuneman about Germania. Miss Thorley found them together when she came down, looking exactly like a princess to Mary Rose, in her white linen skirt and lingerie blouse and with a big black hat all a-bloom with pink roses on her red-brown head.

"I was ready first," Mary Rose cried happily, "but I didn't mind waiting, for I was talking to a friend, to Mrs. Schuneman. She has Germania, you know. This is my friend, Miss Thorley,

Mrs. Schuneman." She introduced them politely.

Miss Thorley nodded carelessly, but even a careless glance told her that there was not the sign of a grouch on Mrs. Schuneman's fat red face that day. Indeed, it quite beamed with friendliness as she hoped that they would have a good time.

"You see, she's very pleasant when you know her," Mary Rose explained as they walked over to the street car. "That's why it's so important to know people. If you don't really know them, you might often think they were grouchy when they aren't."

CHAPTER IX

LAKE NOKOMIS was on the outskirts of Waloo and was a popular pleasure resort for Waloo people from June until September. A band played in the pavilion, there was a moving picture show, a merry-go-round with a wheezy organ, a roller coaster and many other amusement features, as well as several ice-cream parlors. There was always a crowd drifting from one place to another, and Mary Rose fairly danced with delight when she and Miss Thorley became a part of the good-natured throng.

They were standing beside the enclosure in which the fat Shetland ponies waited for the children who were fortunate enough to possess a nickel to pay for a ride on their broad backs or a drive in a roomy carriage, when Mary Rose saw Mr. Jerry. She had sadly refused Miss Thorley's invitation to ride because she did not wish to leave her alone, and Miss Thorley would

not ride one of the ponies nor drive in one of the carriages.

"There's Mr. Jerry!" squealed Mary Rose when she saw him. She could scarcely believe her eyes, but she waved her hand. "He's the man who boards my cat, you know," she explained to Miss Thorley. "And he's very pleasant and friendly, just like a Mifflin man."

Miss Thorley looked first surprised and then displeased and then she frowned and shrugged her shoulders as if she did not really care whether Mr. Jerry was there or not. She gave him rather a curt greeting when he joined them with a cheery:

"Hullo, Mary Rose. Are you thinking of a canter in the park?"

There was nothing curt in the greeting Mary Rose gave him. She smiled enchantingly and slipped her hand into his. "We're just watching the ponies. Aren't they loves? Miss Thorley thinks they are too small for her to ride, but I don't see how she can be sure unless she tries. Do you know Mr. Jerry, Miss Thorley? He's making such a comfortable home for George Wash-

ington. She didn't feel like painting today," she explained to Mr. Jerry, "so we came out for a change. Oh, I do just love that blackest pony, but no one seems to choose him!" She pointed an eager finger to the corner where the blackest and fattest pony stood neglected.

"Suppose you choose him. I've money to treat a lady friend to a ride." And he made a pleasant jingle with the coins in his pocket.

"Miss Thorley invited me, but I didn't like to leave her alone. Would you stay with her, Mr. Jerry? It would be real friendly of you to me and the pony, for if I don't take him I'm afraid no one will, and he'll feel so sad when he goes home tonight. Will you take good care of Miss Thorley, Mr. Jerry?"

"I will," promised Mr. Jerry emphatically, although Miss Thorley exclaimed hurriedly that she could take care of herself. He found a bench from which they could watch Mary Rose as she made the black pony happy and rode around the ring, prouder than any peacock.

"Funny kid, isn't she?" remarked Mr. Jerry, realizing that if there was to be any conversation

between them he would have to begin. "I wish you could have seen her when she came over with her cat to ask if we would take the beast to board. Who's the owner of that joint of yours? I'd like to tell him what I think of him for separating a homesick little girl from her pet."

"It would be rather a nuisance if the place was overrun with cats and dogs and children," Miss Thorley said coldly. "There wouldn't be much peace or comfort in the house."

"The peace and comfort you've had don't seem to agree with all of you," remarked Mr. Jerry pleasantly. "I've seen some of your neighbors who look as if they needed a big dose of noise and discomfort."

"You must mean Mr. Wells. He does have rather a touch-me-not, speak-to-me-never manner. And the fuss he makes if there is any noise in the place after ten o'clock! Imagine him with a cat or a bird." The picture her imagination made was so impossible that she laughed.

Mr. Jerry drew a contented sigh and ventured to move a trifle nearer. He started to say something and then changed his mind. He wouldn't

say anything just then that might bring back that distant expression to her face. He knew very well how cold and forbidding she could be. So instead of saying what he wished to say he talked of Mary Rose and George Washington, and she listened and smiled and made holes in the turf with her parasol, but never once did she speak of the conversation she had had with Mary Rose which had caused her to throw down her brushes and treat herself to a holiday.

Mary Rose's face was an incandescent light as, with a good-by pat for the blackest pony, she ran back to them.

"I felt like a queen!" she cried. "It was splendid. Oh, won't you have a ride?" She looked from one to the other. "I'll pay. I'm making lots of money. You needn't worry another minute about George Washington's board," she told Mr. Jerry. "It's as good as paid."

He laughed. "I won't worry and I shan't ride the ponies. My legs are too long. I'd have to tie double knots in them to keep them off the ground. But I'll take a turn on the merry-go-round with you." He nodded toward that at-

tractive circle of animals as it went around and around to the accompaniment of the wheezy organ. "I dare you to come with us." He looked straight at Miss Thorley.

"Oh, please!" Mary Rose clapped her hands. "You will, won't you, Miss Thorley? You needn't be afraid," she whispered. "I'm sure he's strong enough to hold you on."

Miss Thorley looked anything but afraid as she frowned at the merry-go-round and at Mr. Jerry impartially. But when she met Mary Rose's eyes, filled with a great hunger for merry-go-rounds, she laughed softly and told Mr. Jerry that, of course, she wouldn't take a dare, she never had and she never would, and she thought she'd choose the giraffe because his long neck gave a rider so much to cling to.

It was not easy for Mary Rose to choose a mount. Each animal seemed so very desirable that she sighed as she finally selected an ostrich for the same reason that she had taken the black pony. "I haven't seen a single person ride him and I expect he feels neglected."

But when they mounted the merry-go-round

Miss Thorley stepped into a gay little sleigh drawn by two fat polar bears. After he had seen Mary Rose properly astride the neglected ostrich Mr. Jerry took the seat beside Miss Thorley.

"I promised Mary Rose that I wouldn't let you fall out," he said, as if that could be the only reason he would ride beside her.

Much to Mary Rose's amazement, Miss Thorley was satisfied with one ride, although Mr. Jerry very handsomely offered them a turn on each animal. Mary Rose could not resist such an invitation and one by one she rode on a giraffe, a camel, and a lion.

"Mercy, mercy, Mary Rose!" Miss Thorley said at last. "You must stop. Your head will be completely turned. And we must go home."

"Won't you ride back with me?" asked Mr. Jerry. "I have the car. If you will, we have time for a sundae first."

Mary Rose's heart all but stopped beating as she waited for Miss Thorley to say they would. It didn't seem possible that anyone, even an independent woman, could refuse such an alluring invitation. But grown-ups were queer. Mary

Rose had found that out long, long ago. She did not hesitate for even the fraction of a second when Miss Thorley turned and left the decision to her. A moment later they were in the ice cream parlor that was like a cool green cave after the heat and the light outside.

Mary Rose chose a chocolate sundae and she giggled as she looked at the rich brown sauce. "When I was little, nothing but a baby," she said, "I thought that it was the yellow in the eggs I ate that made my hair yellow. Do you suppose if I ate lots and lots of chocolate, I'd ever have hair as brown as Miss Thorley's. Isn't it beautiful, Mr. Jerry?"

"Very beautiful!" Mr. Jerry agreed as heartily as she could wish.

Miss Thorley flushed uncomfortably under the admiration of Mr. Jerry and Mary Rose. "Mary Rose," she said hurriedly, "don't you know you shouldn't make personal remarks?"

"Eh?" Mary Rose's attention was centered in the well she was making in her ice cream for the chocolate syrup.

"You shouldn't talk of people's hair and eyes."

The rebuke was far more feeble than Miss Thorley had meant it to be.

"You shouldn't!" Mary Rose was so surprised that she left the well half made. "Why, in Mifflin when we liked the way a friend looked we always told them."

Miss Thorley pushed away her sundae. "Mary Rose, if you say Mifflin again, I'll scream."

Mary Rose's cheeks turned as pink as Miss Thorley's cheeks had turned. "That's what Aunt Kate says sometimes, but if you like a place the way I like Mifflin you just have to talk about it. It's—it's in your heart."

"Talk about it to me, Mary Rose," Mr. Jerry offered kindly. "It doesn't make me cross to hear of a place where people are kind and friendly. My conscience is perfectly clear." He spoke as if he were very proud of his clear conscience.

Miss Thorley pushed back her chair. "It doesn't make me cross," she said, "only——"

They waited courteously to hear what would follow "only," but nothing ever did. Miss Thorley just jumped up and said instead that really they

must go. Mr. Jerry's eyes twinkled as he agreed with her.

It was far more pleasant riding to town in Mr. Jerry's automobile than it would have been in the crowded street car. Mary Rose called Miss Thorley's attention to the crowd as she snuggled close to her in the spacious tonneau.

"I'm playing it's mine," she whispered, "and that Mr. Jerry is my own driver. Wouldn't it be fun to drive with him forever and ever?"

Mr. Jerry heard her and sharpened his ears for the answer.

"You'd get tired riding forever with anyone, Mary Rose. There is only one thing that people never get tired of."

"What's that?" Mary Rose hungered to hear.

"Work." Mr. Jerry sniffed. They could hear him in the tonneau.

Mary Rose shook her head. "Gladys' mother did. She said she had never had enough fun to know whether she would get tired of it or not, but she'd had plenty of chance to know there were some things she never wanted to see again, and one of them was work and the other was the red

and black plaid silk dress that the dressmaker spoiled."

Mr. Jerry chuckled on the front seat and after a second Miss Thorley laughed, too.

"Mary Rose," she said very distinctly, "I'll have to give you a broader vision. You have entirely too narrow an outlook."

"What's that, Miss Thorley? What's a broader vision?" Mary Rose couldn't imagine.

It was Mr. Jerry who answered. "In this particular case, Mary Rose, it's seeing far too much for one and not enough for two."

As they rolled up to the Washington Miss Carter came down the street with Bob Strahan whom she had met on the car. It was amazing, now that they were on speaking terms, how often they met. Bob Strahan stopped to open the door of the automobile and help Miss Thorley out, and Mary Rose proudly introduced Mr. Jerry who boarded her cat. They all laughed and talked together for a few minutes and then Mary Rose hopped from the back seat to the front.

"I'll go around and see George Washington, if you don't mind," she said. "Hasn't it been

just the loveliest afternoon, the kind you're always hoping for but never really expect to have," with a sigh of rapture. She patted Mr. Jerry's arm lovingly. "Isn't Miss Thorley a darling! She told me all about that Independence. It isn't a witch as you thought, Mr. Jerry, it's something about wanting to pay her own bills and live alone. I don't understand it," she frowned, "but that's what she said."

Mr. Jerry frowned too, as he turned into the alley. "She doesn't know," he said briefly. "Take it from me, Mary Rose, that Independence is an old witch, and she's enchanted more girls than you could count."

Mary Rose looked doubtful. "If Miss Thorley really is enchanted," she suggested, "we must find something to break the spell. I told her she wouldn't have to stop work to make a home for a family, Mr. Jerry," she whispered encouragingly.

"Did you?" Mr. Jerry laughed. "What did she say?"

Mary Rose knit her small brows before she answered. "I don't think she just agreed with me, but I'll explain it to her again."

CHAPTER X

WHEN Mary Rose ran up to get Jenny Lind young Mrs. Johnson met her at the door and smiled pleasantly.

"You're the little girl for the canary?" she said. "I was wondering—Mother Johnson seems to have taken a fancy to you—and I wondered if you would go out for a little walk with her every morning. I'll pay you ten cents a day."

Mary Rose's eyes popped open. In Mifflin little girls were expected to do what they were asked to do and were never paid for such tasks.

"Why, of course, I'd be glad to," she said promptly.

"That will be splendid. You see she won't go by herself and I have my own engagements. The doctor said she must have some exercise," sighed Mrs. Johnson, as if the doctor had made a most unreasonable demand. "Suppose you come up

tomorrow about eleven? That will give you time for a good walk before lunch."

"I'll soon be making money enough to send for Solomon," Mary Rose told Mrs. Donovan, her voice trembling with excitement. "There's ten cents a day from Grandma Johnson and ten cents from Mrs. Bracken for washing the breakfast dishes and a quarter from Miss Thorley. Why, Aunt Kate, I never thought there was so much money in the world as what I'm going to earn by myself!"

Aunt Kate laughed as she hugged her. "There's no one in the house can be cross to her," she told Uncle Larry proudly.

Promptly at eleven o'clock the next morning Mary Rose was waiting for Mother Johnson who grumbled and fussed before she could be persuaded to take the walk the doctor had recommended. But, once outside, the sky was so blue, the air so pleasant, and Mary Rose so sociable that her face grew less peevish.

"Where shall we go?" Mary Rose paused at the corner. "You see I'm a stranger here. In Mifflin I knew the way everywhere. Aunt Kate

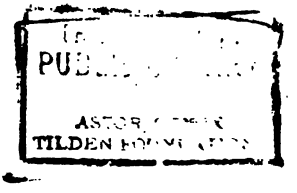
said there was a little park over this street. Perhaps it would be pleasant there?"

Mother Johnson said grumpily that it made little difference to her, all she wanted was to have her walk over and be home again.

"But you'll feel better after your exercise," promised Mary Rose. "I should think you'd love to be outdoors. Your home is very pretty, but it isn't like the outdoors, you know. Did you ever see the sky so blue? It looks as if it was made out of the very silk that was in Miss Lucy Miller's bridesmaid's dress. It was the most beautiful dress Miss Lena Carlson ever made. Miss Lena goes out sewing for a dollar and a half a day." And she described the wedding at which Miss Lucy Miller had worn the frock made by the dollar and a half a day seamstress with an enthusiasm that was undimmed by Mother Johnson's lack of interest. From the wedding and Miss Lucy it was but a step to other Mifflin happenings. They found themselves in the park before they knew it.

"It's something like the cemetery in Mifflin," Mary Rose said after she had looked about.

"'It's a squirrel! A really truly squirrel in this big city!'"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"Of course, there aren't any graves but there is a monument and seats. Do you want to sit down? Oh, do look, grandma! Do look," and she pulled the black sleeve beside her.

Since she had come to Waloo Mother Johnson had not been called grandma and she had missed the grandchildren she had left behind more than she realized. Mary Rose had called most of the older women in Mifflin grandma—Grandma Robinson and Grandma Smith. It was a friendly little custom that was in vogue there and so she had unhesitatingly called old Mrs. Johnson grandma. Mrs. Johnson was so surprised that she had nothing to say when Mary Rose pulled her to a bench and pointed a trembling finger at a little brownish-grayish animal which stood up in the grass and looked at them with bright eyes.

"Do you see what that is?" Mary Rose's voice shook. "It's a squirrel! A really truly squirrel in this big city! Here, squirrelly, squirrelly," she snapped her fingers. "I wish I had something to feed you!" despairingly as the squirrel ran away.

Grandma Johnson had her purse in the bag she carried and she opened it and took out five cents.

"Here," she said crossly, "go and get something to feed him with if that's what you're crying for."

Mary Rose straightened herself and threw her arms around Grandma Johnson's knees. "Why—why!" she gasped, "I do think you are a regular fairy godmother!"

Grandma Johnson had been called several names since she had been in the Washington. Once she had heard Hilda in the kitchen speak of her as "the old hen" and had almost had apoplexy. And Larry Donovan had muttered that she was "an old crank" which was what one might expect of a mannerless janitor but no one had ever called her a fairy godmother. It sounded rather pleasant. She actually smiled as Mary Rose ran over to the popcorn wagon on the corner and came back with a bag of peanuts.

"What wouldn't I give if Tom had a girl like that!" she sighed. "But then he'd have to move. Children aren't allowed in the Washington."

Mary Rose insisted on an exact division of the nuts. "You want to feed them just as much as I do." She hadn't a doubt of that. "So you must have half. When the squirrel sees how many we

have perhaps he'll bring his brothers and sisters and have a squirrel party," she giggled.

Indeed, it did seem as if the squirrel had sent out invitations when he saw the heap of nuts that Mary Rose and Grandma Johnson had beside them for, one after another, other squirrels came until half a dozen clustered around them. They were very tame. One even climbed up Mary Rose's arm for the nut she held between her lips and Grandma Johnson lured another to her shoulder.

"Aren't they ducks?" Mary Rose demanded. A red poppy blossomed in each of her cheeks and her eyes were lit with candles. "I do believe the Lord sent them here to be pets for people who live in houses where there's a law against dogs and cats and children. I think it was—it was wonderful in Him! Don't you? Shall we come every day and feed them? Then they'll really get acquainted with us and we'll be friends. Oh, I'm so glad that I know you—that we know each other!" She threw her arms around the startled Grandma Johnson and gave her another hug.

They met Mrs. Schuneman on the steps when

they went home and Mary Rose had to stop and tell her the wonderful news, that the Lord had put pets in the park for people who couldn't have them in their homes. She introduced Grandma Johnson and Mrs. Schuneman, who had looked at each other furtively when they had met in the halls but who had never spoken until now.

"It's just as well not to make friends with the people who live in the same apartment house you do," young Mrs. Johnson had told Grandma when she came to make her home with her son. "You can't tell who they are."

"You can tell they are human beings," Mother Johnson had muttered but that was not enough for her daughter-in-law and the older woman had been too depressed by the strangeness of everything about her to make friends for herself.

She even hesitated now when Mary Rose's inquiry after the health of Germania brought an invitation to step in and see how much at home Germania was. But in Mary Rose's opinion one could not refuse such an invitation and she drew Grandma Johnson in to admire and to exclaim over Germania, who did seem very contented.

They had a very pleasant little visit and Mrs. Schuneman eagerly asked them both to come again. Mother Johnson gathered courage to say she would, she'd be glad to.

"Haven't we had a gorgeous time?" Mary Rose asked as they went up the stairs. "I think it's very kind of you to let me go walking with you. I'm so glad the doctor said you needed exercise."

And Grandma Johnson smiled and patted the small shoulder. There was not a trace of the old peevishness on her face which was like a withered apple. "I don't know but I'm glad, too, Mary Rose. I'll see you tomorrow."

"You certainly will. Won't the squirrels be glad to see us? Good-by." She ran down the stairs with the ten cents in her hand. The coin dropped on the landing and rolled away. She was looking for it when Mr. Wells came up and almost walked over her. Mary Rose was on her feet in a flash.

"Good morning," she said politely. "I'm looking for the dime I dropped. I earned it walking with Grandma Johnson. We had the grandest

time in the park. Did you know that there are pets there for people who can't have them in their homes? They're squirrels and the Lord put them there. Oh, here's my dime. Good-by." And she ran on while Mr. Wells stood and stared after her as if he thought he or she had lost their wits and he was not sure which.

He went on up and met Larry Donovan.

"Donovan," he said sharply. "I thought children were not allowed in this building?"

"No more they are, Mr. Wells," Larry tried to speak pleasantly. "There's a clause in every lease that says so."

"Then why do you allow a child to run all over the place?" Mr. Wells wanted to know and he scowled fiercely.

Larry straightened himself and a dull red crept up into his face. "If you mean my niece by your remarks," he said stiffly, "she isn't a child. She's—she's," he stumbled, "she's goin' on fourteen."

"She has a long time to go before she ever reaches fourteen," grimly. "Do Brown and Lawson know you have a child living with you?"

"They do not." Larry's tone was as short and crisp as pie crust.

"H-m," was all Mr. Wells said to that but he looked at Larry before he went into his apartment and slammed the door.

"The ol' chimpanzee 'll tell Brown an' Lawson," Uncle Larry told Aunt Kate when he came down and found her in the bedroom. "That's what he'll do. He's goin' to complain about Mary Rose."

Aunt Kate stared at him. "An' what'll you do, Larry Donovan? What'll you do then?"

"I'll tell them they know what they can do if they don't like it," he answered gruffly. "I've been a good man for the place. I've kept the peace with the tenants though, God knows, it's been no easy job. I've kept the bills down an' made a lot of the repairs myself an' if Brown an' Lawson want to fire me just because my niece, my wife's niece, an inoffensive little kid, is livin' with us why they can fire. That's what they can do. I'd be ashamed to stay an' work for them."

"Larry," Mrs. Donovan put her arms around her husband and kissed him. "Larry Donovan,

I'm that proud of you I can't see!" And she put her hand over her wet eyes. "Then you like to have Mary Rose here?"

"I'll tell you the truth, Kate, dear. The little thing has made herself necessary to me. That's what she's done. We got along all right without her but that was because we didn't know what it was to have a kid in the house. No, sir, Mary Rose is one of the fam'ly and she stays with the fam'ly. She's good for the tenants, too. See what she's done for Mrs. Willoughby an' Mrs. Schuneman. The ol' lady called me in to hear her bird sing this very morning. An' Mrs. Bracken, who's so busy club workin' for other folks she hasn't any time for her home, tells me Mary Rose is the biggest kind of a help to her. I thought she was goin' to jaw me about fixin' that back window 't sticks a bit. I should have fixed it before but it clean slipped my mind, an' I up an' asked her how Mary Rose was doing. She forgot the window to talk about the kid. 'Ain't she small for her age?' says she. 'I guess you don't know much about childern,' says I. 'Mary Rose's as big as she should be!' 'When I was fourteen,'

says she, 'I weighed a hunderd an' ten poun's.' 'That's a good weight for a growing girl,' says I. 'I don't believe you weigh much more'n that now, Mrs. Bracken,' says I. And that ended it. She weighs a hunderd an' thirty if she weighs a pound. An' then there's the Johnsons. Young Mrs. Johnson said this morning that it would be a blessed relief if Mary Rose'd get the ol' lady out every day. I guess there's a place for her here all right, whether ol' Wells sees it or not."

"Wouldn't it be just as well for you to tell Brown an' Lawson your story first?" asked Mrs. Donovan. "Of course, when it's a tenant again' a janitor the janitor don't stand much show. But if you tell the agents that your wife's niece, a girl goin' on fourteen, is staying with you an' makin' herself useful to the tenants they won't come here with a lot of confusin' questions when Mr. Wells has had his say. Seems if it was the one who spoke first who gets the mos' attention. Haven't you any errand that could take you down there the first thing in the mornin'?"

Larry laughed scornfully. "I have that. I can al'ys find a complaint to carry if I'm so minded.

I guess you're right an' it won't do no harm to get our side in first. Where's Mary Rose now?"

"She's gone over to Mr. Jerry's. The cat's board's overdue." Evidently Aunt Kate thought that overdue board was a laughing matter for she chuckled. "Mary Rose was horrified when she remembered she'd forgotten to pay but I said Mr. Jerry 'd understand that she wasn't used to business. So long as she paid in the end a little waiting wouldn't matter."

Mr. Jerry had just driven into the garage when the delinquent Mary Rose slipped in at the back gate.

"Hullo, Mary Rose," he called cheerily.

"I've come to pay George Washington's board," importantly. "I'm ashamed I'm late but I forgot. I'm not used to business," she apologized, mortification dyeing her cheeks pink.

"That's all right. But if it's board you're going to pay we'd better go in and see my Aunt Mary."

His Aunt Mary looked mildly surprised when Mary Rose announced that she had come to pay

George Washington's board and she was sorry she was late. Aunt Mary pursed her lips in a way that made Mary Rose quake until she remembered that she was earning a lot of money and it really didn't matter if the board was more than fifty cents. And George Washington did have an awful appetite.

Mr. Jerry's Aunt Mary was saying so. "That cat is perfectly hollow. It's amazing the milk he drinks. He has been here a little over a week, Mary Rose," again mortification painted Mary Rose's cheeks, "and in that time he has caught five mice. It is impossible to estimate the damage that five mice would have done if they hadn't been caught so I figure that George Washington has earned his own board."

"Why, George Washington!" Mary Rose could scarcely grasp this but when she did she caught the cat to her in a rapturous hug. "Isn't he the very smartest cat? Why, he's self-supporting, isn't he?" And she hugged him again. "If he keeps on earning his board I can send for Solomon. I don't suppose you would want to board a dog, too? I think I'd almost feel as if I were

in Heaven to have my animal friends with me again."

"What kind of dog is Solomon?" Mr. Jerry asked carelessly. "I've been thinking of buying a dog but perhaps I could rent old Sol."

"Mr. Jerry! I'd be glad to let you have him for his board. He's splendid, a real fox terrier, and that clever. He can do lots of tricks. You couldn't help but love him. He's so affectionate and friendly."

"It was a fox terrier that I thought of buying. Then we can consider that settled, Mary Rose. You send for Sol as soon as you please and I'll board him for the use of him. I think he would look well on the front seat of the car."

Mary Rose had jumped to her feet and, with George Washington still in her arms, she threw herself on Mr. Jerry in a perfect spasm of delighted gratitude that brought tears to the eyes of both of them for George Washington was not accustomed to being squeezed between a young man and a little girl.

"What a—what a splendid man you are!" cried Mary Rose. "You're like King Arthur and Robin

Hood, always succoring the friendless though I'm not friendless when I have you and your Aunt Mary and all the people over there." She nodded across at the white face of the Washington.

"All the people?" questioned Mr. Jerry. He had heard of some of them who did not act friendly.

"Well, perhaps not all—yet," amended Mary Rose. "I do like to be friends with people, Mr. Jerry. It gives you such a comfortable feeling inside. When you're not friends it's just as if you had the stomachache and the headache at the same time."

Mr. Jerry's Aunt Mary brought in some cookies and three glasses of ginger ale, all sparkling and frosty.

"It's a party," beamed Mary Rose. "I've always thought the world was full of nice people and now I know it. Aunt Kate's forever telling me that I'm too little to know the good from the bad but I tell her there isn't any bad, that the Lord wouldn't waste His time and dust, and anyway I have the right kind of an eye. I showed that when I made friends with you and Mr. Jerry."

When she left she hesitated at the gate. "Would it be a bother if I brought a friend over to see George Washington?" she ventured. "I'd like Miss Thorley to meet him and then perhaps she'd paint his picture."

"I should think she would," promptly agreed Mr. Jerry. "He's a cat who deserves to have his portrait painted. Bring over any friends you wish, Mary Rose," hospitably, "but let me know first so George Washington will be home. Sometimes I take him out with me," gravely.

Mary Rose gazed at him with adoration. "I don't believe I could have found a better boarding place for him, not if I had searched all Waloo. I'll let you know, Mr. Jerry, just as soon as I know myself."

CHAPTER XI

BUT before Mary Rose could write the letter that would tell Jimmie Bronson that she was now financially able to maintain her animal friends she had a big surprise.

The day had been warm and sultry, the sort that makes every nerve disagreeably alive and brings to the surface all the unpleasant little traits that in cooler weather one can keep hidden.

"Old General Humidity hasn't shirked his job a minute to-day," Bob Strahan told Miss Carter as they left the car and walked up the block to the Washington together.

In front of them sauntered a boy with a dog at his heels. The boy was a sturdy young fellow of perhaps fourteen, very shabby as to clothes but very dauntless as to manner. The dog was a fox terrier with one black spot over his left eye like a patch. Bob Strahan whistled and snapped his fingers at him.

"I've always meant to have a fox terrier some day," he told Miss Carter. "They're so intelligent."

But this particular fox terrier, while he wagged his tail and looked around to see who whistled, kept close to the heels of the boy who looked carefully at the houses as if in search of one. When he came to the Washington he stood and stared up at the long brick wall with its many windows peering so curiously down at him, much as Mary Rose had stared less than a month before.

"Well, young man," Bob Strahan said pleasantly, "is there anyone here you wish to see?"

"Gee," exclaimed the boy with a fervor that seemed to come from his dusty heels, "I hadn't any idea it would be such a big place!"

"It isn't a cottage," agreed Bob Strahan amiably, "nor yet a bungalow. But a roof has to be some size to cover a couple of dozen families. What particular family are you interested in, may I ask?" He stooped to pat the black-eyed fox terrier as it sniffed his ankles. "Some dog!" he told the boy.

Down the street came Mary Rose and Miss

Thorley. Mary Rose had been to the bakery for rolls for supper and had met Miss Thorley on the corner. The little group by the steps of the Washington could hear her voice before they saw her and the boy swung around and listened.

"I used to think that if I wasn't a human being, made in the image of God, I'd like to be the milkman's horse in Mifflin," he heard Mary Rose say and he chuckled.

"Why, Mary Rose?" laughed Miss Thorley.

"Because it was so friendly to go from house to house every morning with milk for the babies and cream for the coffee. Everyone in Mifflin was a friend to old Whiteface. Why—why!" she broke her story short to stand still and stare at the boy and the dog, who were both staring at her. The boy's face was one broad grin and the dog's tail was wagging frantically. "Why, Solomon Crocker! It's never you! Oh, Solomon!" as he darted to her. "I've missed you more than tongue could tell. It seems a hundred thousand years since we were together. Jimmie Bronson, however did you know that I'd made arrangements for Solomon to come to Waloo?"

"I didn't know but I wanted to leave Mifflin and I couldn't let old Sol stay alone. You know Aunt Nora died just after you left and there wasn't any home for me any more. I wanted to see the world so I thought I'd bring the pup and if you didn't want him I'd be glad to keep him. He's a dandy dog and he's valuable. He's helped to more than pay our way." He jingled the contents of his pocket so that they could hear how Solomon had helped.

"How did he do that, Jimmie? I'm sorry about your Aunt Nora but now you have one more friend in Heaven and you've lots left on earth. He's got heaps of friends right here, hasn't he?" She looked at Bob Strahan and the two girls for confirmation of her words. "We're all friends in Waloo. But how did Solomon help you to earn your way?"

Jimmie laughed sheepishly. "I've taught him a lot of new tricks. He's a smart dog and learned like lightning. Folks were glad to see him perform. I never asked for pay but they always gave me something. I could have sold him half a dozen times for big money but he's

your dog, Mary Rose, so I brought him right along."

"Show us his new tricks," begged Mary Rose. "Show them to us this minute."

So Miss Thorley and Miss Carter, with Mary Rose between them, and Bob Strahan sat down on the broad front steps and watched Jimmie Bronson put Solomon through his repertoire. Mrs. Schuneman and Lottie joined them and from their windows Mrs. Bracken and Mrs. Willoughby watched the performance. Solomon really was a clever dog and Jimmie had been an excellent teacher so that the entertainment was very creditable. They were all so interested in it that they never saw an addition to their number until a harsh strident voice sounded beside them. It made Mary Rose jump and Mrs. Bracken and Mrs. Willoughby suddenly left their windows.

"Mein lieber Gott!" Mrs. Schuneman rose involuntarily and heavily to her feet. "It's Mr. Wells!"

"What's this? What's this?" Lightning flashed from Mr. Wells' eyes and thunder rumbled in his voice. No wonder everyone was

startled. "Dogs aren't allowed here. Where's Donovan? He shouldn't allow such a nuisance. Run along, boy, and take your dog with you. You aren't allowed here!"

"It isn't his dog." Mary Rose ran in front of him. "It's my dog and he's come all the way from Mifflin. I wish you'd been here earlier so you could see how smart he is," timidly. "He knows such a lot of funny tricks. Jimmie, will you have him do that one—"

"Your dog!" interrupted Mr. Wells, with a snort, and his fiery eyes seemed to bore a hole right through Mary Rose, who was trying desperately to remember that she had the right kind of eye and could see nothing but good in the cross old man in front of her. "You know very well that dogs are not allowed in this house. Take him away, boy, and don't let me see either of you again."

"Oh!" Mary Rose's heart was full of indignation. So were her eyes. She was too hurt to be afraid. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself, a great big man like you to talk that way to a poor little dog who has come all the way from Mifflin

expecting to find friends here? He's my dog and—"

But Mr. Wells would not let her finish. "You can't keep him here," he snarled. He was furious at being spoken to in such a fashion by a janitor's child and before a group of young people who did their best to look serious. "You haven't any business here yourself. Children and dogs are forbidden in this building."

Mrs. Donovan had come to the basement window just in time to hear this angry outburst and she called hastily: "Mary Rose! Mary Rose!"

Mary Rose never heard her. "Why are you always picking at me?" she demanded of Mr. Wells. "I'm only a little girl and you're a big man but never once since I came to Waloo have you looked as if you wanted to be friends with me. I don't mean to be impudent but you—you do make it very hard for me to like you." Her lip quivered and she turned quickly and hid her face against Miss Thorley's white skirt.

Miss Thorley's arm went around her and a thrill of emotion rarely intense ran over the older

girl. When she spoke her voice was strange even to herself:

"Really, Mr. Wells, this is all very unnecessary. You have not been annoyed by Mary Rose or her pets. I think you can trust to her and to the Donovans—"

"Oh, you can!" Mary Rose's face came out again and she was so eager to assure him that he could that she forgot how rude it is to interrupt. "You shan't ever see Solomon unless you look out of one of the windows in the white-faced wall. He's going to live with Mr. Jerry. I've made all the arrangements. I never meant you to be bothered with him. But I do wish you'd like him. He's a very friendly dog," wistfully. "He'd like you to like him."

Mr. Wells looked at the friendly dog who wanted to be liked, and at Mary Rose, before his eyes swept the older group. There was not the faintest trace of a smile on the faces of Miss Thorley and Miss Carter, but there was more than a trace on the countenance of Bob Strahan.

"I don't like dogs!" the grin made him say with

a snap. "I won't have one here!" And he went up the steps and slammed the screen door behind him.

"Mercy, mercy!" feebly murmured Mr. Strahan. "You might think he owned the whole works. My rent comes due every month, just as his does."

At her window Aunt Kate wrung her hands and thought sadly how comfortable they were in the basement of the Washington. Mr. Wells would never rest now until he had Larry discharged. She knew he wouldn't. He would never overlook the fact that Mary Rose had talked back to him on the very steps of the Washington. She could not blame Mary Rose, the child had had provocation enough, goodness knows, but she wished—she wished—Oh, how fervently she wished that Mr. Wells had never been born!

Mary Rose looked sadly after the retreating figure which looked as friendly and unbending as a poker.

"He won't ever forget I called him a crosspatch," she said sadly and she blushed.

"What!" There was an astonished chorus.

How had she dared? It did not sound like Mary Rose.

"I did!" the color in her cheeks deepened painfully. "I never meant to but the words were in my mind and so they slipped out of my mouth. Come on, Jimmie, we'll take Solomon over to Mr. Jerry's. He'll be glad to see him. He's a human being."

"I think I'll go, too," suggested Bob Strahan who scented a story. "Have you seen George Washington, the self-supporting cat?" he asked Miss Thorley and Miss Carter.

"All of you come," begged Mary Rose, glowing happily again. "Mr. Jerry'd be glad to have you and there's plenty of room in the back yard. I'd like to have you see my cat. Isn't it wonderful that George Washington and Solomon are self-supporting? That's being independent, isn't it, Miss Thorley? Will you come?" she caught her hand and drew her to her feet.

Miss Thorley hesitated. If George Washington had been boarding with anyone but Jerry Longworthy she would have gone at once but Jerry Longworthy was very apt to forget that

she preferred work to love. If she went to his back yard he would be sure to think that her coming was an inch and proceed to make an ell out of it. It would be far wiser to stay away. So she shook her head. "Not now, Mary Rose," she said gently. "Some other time."

After a quick glance at her face Mary Rose did not tease but went off with the others. They found Mr. Jerry in the back yard. He looked beyond them as if he found the party too small but as no one followed to complete it he gave his attention to Solomon and pronounced him something of a dog. When Jimmie had put him through his tricks again Mr. Jerry gravely shook hands with both boy and dog.

"You've been a fine teacher," he said to Jimmie. "I congratulate you."

Jimmie's face was as scarlet as the poppies in Mr. Jerry's Aunt Mary's garden. "Oh, go on!" he murmured in delighted embarrassment.

"Just think, they walked all the way from Mifflin!" exclaimed Mary Rose in a voice of awe. "It took an automobile and a train and a taxicab to bring me."

"Well, I didn't have money for an auto nor a train nor a taxi," grinned Jimmie, "so Sol and I walked. Not all the way. Folks gave us a lift now and then."

"Of course they did. You'd be sure to find friends," Mary Rose told him jubilantly. "That's the beautiful part of traveling. You find friends everywhere."

"Sure!" Jimmie winked at Mr. Jerry and Bob Strahan. "I found one friend so glad to see me that he had me arrested."

"Why, Jimmie Bronson!" Mary Rose's eyes were as large as the largest kind of saucers. "What for? Was Solomon arrested, too?" She looked reprovingly at her dog.

Jimmie chuckled. "I told you I had more than one chance to sell the brute," with a loving kick at Solomon. "And one man was so mad when I told him 'nothing doing' that he had me arrested. Said I had stolen the dog from him. You see there's some class to old Sol but there isn't much to me. The judge didn't know which of us was lying until I told him that Sol was a trick dog and would the man who was trying to put one

over on me run through his tricks to show they had worked together. The cuss turned green and stammered that he wasn't no animal tamer. The judge gave me a chance and we had a great performance in the courtroom. When it was over the judge said he guessed if I'd had Solomon long enough to teach him so much the man, if he was the owner, should have found him before. He fined the other chap a greenback and gave it to me. We had beefsteak and potatoes for supper instead of going to jail, didn't we, old sport?"

"Good for you!" Mr. Jerry gave him a comradely slap on the shoulder.

Bob Strahan nodded significantly to Miss Carter. "Didn't I say I'd get a story out of this?" he whispered.

"What are you going to do now, Jimmie?" asked Mary Rose. "You aren't going back to Mifflin?"

No, Jimmie wasn't going back to Mifflin. He thought, rather vaguely, he'd stay in Waloo and see the world. There must be something there for a boy to do if he were strong and willing.

"Oh, there is! Isn't there?" Mary Rose

looked appealingly from Mr. Jerry to Bob Strahan.

"Sure, there is," Mr. Jerry told her heartily. He asked for further particulars. Just what would Jimmie like to do? Had he any plans?

Jimmie hadn't any plans just at present beyond food and shelter but in ten years or so he hoped to be an electrician. Of course, that couldn't be until he was a man. In the meantime he'd take anything and if he could get a job that would let him go to school he'd be about the happiest kid in the world.

"You can get that kind of job," Bob Strahan told him easily. "I'll write a little story about your trip and your arrest for the *Gazette* and I'll bet you'll have a lot of jobs offered you."

"And until you do you can stay here. There's a little room up there," Mr. Jerry nodded toward his attic, "that would just about fit a boy of your size. Do you know anything about autos? Have you ever met a lawn mower? I guess I can find work for you until you get a regular job."

Every freckle on Jimmie's freckled face glowed gratefully. Mary Rose jumped up and down.

"Mr. Jerry!" she began in a choked voice. She ran to him and hid her face against his hand. "First you took my cat," she gasped chokingly, "and then you took my dog and now my friend from Mifflin. I—I don't believe a friendlier man ever lived!"

"Mary Rose!" It was Aunt Kate's voice from the back door of the Washington. "Bring your friend in to supper." Aunt Kate knew that, under the circumstances, she had no business to ask a boy into the house but she felt desperately that now it did not matter what she did and it would please Mary Rose.

"Well, Mary Rose," Bob Strahan pulled her hair as they trooped back to the Washington, leaving Solomon jumping frantically at Mr. Jerry's snapping fingers, "are you happy now?"

Mary Rose's face clouded. "Half of me's happy and half of me isn't," she confessed in a low voice. "It makes me mad not to be friends with everybody and I can't honestly feel that Mr. Wells and I are friends."

CHAPTER XII

MR. BRACKEN found one morning, when he had reached his office, that he had forgotten some important papers. He went home at noon to get them. He let himself into the apartment and walked directly into the living-room. He stopped with an exclamation of surprise for on the broad davenport was a little girl fast asleep. One of her arms was thrown protectingly about a brass cage in which a bird swung lazily.

"Well, upon my word!" muttered Mr. Bracken. He looked about to be sure he was in the right apartment. He had been away from home and had not met Mary Rose.

The words, low as they were uttered, reached Mary Rose's ear and she opened her eyes. When she saw a tall man staring somewhat frowningly at her she sat up suddenly.

"I—I hope you're Mr. Bracken, Mrs. Bracken's husband?" she said. There was a tremble

in her voice as she slipped from the davenport and bobbed a curtsy. There was a shake in her knees, also. Suppose this strange man should be a burglar? The thought was enough to make the voice and knees of any little girl tremble and shake. But the strange man nodded curtly and Mary Rose laughed tremulously. "I thought perhaps you were a burglar," she confessed at once. "I never knew a real burglar but I see now you don't look a bit like one. If I hadn't been so sleepy I'd have seen it at once for I've the right kind of an eye, the kind that can see the good in people. I think you have, too, because your eyes are just the same color my daddy's were and he had the right kind. Gracious! I should just think he had!"

"Never mind about eyes," Mr. Bracken said impatiently. "What are you doing here?"

"I'll tell you," she blushed. "I came up to wash the dishes, as I do every morning for Mrs. Bracken, and I left the key on the outside and the wind slammed the door shut. I couldn't open it. I thought I'd have to wait until Mrs. Bracken came home to let me out. I didn't dare make a

noise for fear I'd disturb Mr. Wells. I must have gone to sleep for I never heard you come in. I live in the cellar with my Aunt Kate and Uncle Larry. At first I felt like a green cucumber pickle because in Mifflin, where I used to live, there wasn't anything in our cellar but a swinging shelf for pickles and jellies and a person couldn't ever feel like a glass of plum jelly, could they? So I felt like a cucumber pickle but now I don't mind it at all. I love to live in the cellar. There's everything in getting used to things, isn't there? I like it here now pretty well for I've lots of friends. Mrs. Schuneman and Germania and Mrs. Johnson, the grandma one. We go to the park every day and feed her pet squirrel. The Lord keeps it there because she can't have any pets but canary birds in houses like this. There's a law against it, Uncle Larry said. And there's Miss Thorley, the enchanted princess, who's painting my picture for Mr. Bingham Henderson's jam to tell people how good it is. She gave me some once, apricot. We only had strawberry and raspberry and plum and grape and apple butter in Mifflin. I used to stir the apple butter

for Lena. You have to stir it all the time or it burns. It makes your arm awful tired but it's good for the muscle. Feel mine!" She clenched her small arm and held it out so that Mr. Bracken could feel her muscles.

He murmured: "I'll be darned!" in a dazed sort of a way as he felt her muscle, and Mary Rose went on sociably.

"And there's Mrs. Bracken. She said I washed her dishes better than a full-sized girl. And now there's you. Have you had any lunch?" she demanded suddenly. "Shall I get you some?" she wanted to know when he had admitted that he hadn't had anything to eat since breakfast. "Mrs. Bracken wouldn't like it if I let you go away hungry. It won't take a minute. You just keep an eye on Jenny Lind." And she put Jenny Lind on the table at his elbow before she flew to the kitchen.

Mr. Bracken stood and stared at Jenny Lind and then at the door through which Mary Rose had disappeared. "Well, I'll be darned!" he said again. He went to his desk and found his important papers. He did not intend to stay

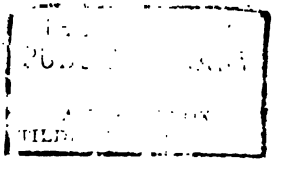
for lunch but when Mary Rose flew back to demand hurriedly whether he liked his eggs fried or boiled he told her boiled.

A postponed meeting brought Mrs. Bracken home that day several hours before she had planned. She stopped on the threshold in astonishment when she heard voices and laughter in the rear of her apartment. She hurried back with pursed lips and frowning face for both laugh and voice had sounded young. If Mary Rose were making free with her things she would give Mary Rose a good big piece of her mind and then she would present Mrs. Donovan with an equal portion.

She went through the dining-room and into the kitchen to find Joseph Bracken—*Joseph Bracken*—sitting at the kitchen table eating boiled eggs and drinking tea. Mary Rose was perched on a chair across from him and was telling him of Mifflin. Jenny Lind's cage was between them.

"Why—why," gasped Mrs. Bracken. She could not say another word. She forgot all about the big piece of her mind that she was going to

"Mary Rose was perched on a chair across from him and was telling him of Mifflin."



give Mary Rose and stood there staring with bulging eyes.

Mary Rose jumped to the floor. "Here's Mrs. Bracken!" she cried in delight. "Isn't it a pity we didn't know she was coming? I could just as well have boiled another egg. But there's plenty of tea. It's like a party, isn't it? Except that we haven't any birthday candles. In Mifflin I always had candles on my birthday cake because daddy said a birthday should be like a candle, a light to guide you into the new year. Shall I boil an egg for you, Mrs. Bracken?"

Mrs. Bracken sat down suddenly in the chair Mary Rose had vacated and murmured helplessly: "Well, upon my word!"

"That's what I said," smiled Mr. Bracken, which wasn't exactly true although the words he had used meant the same thing, "when I came home and found a girl and a bird on the davenport."

"I locked myself in," Mary Rose explained with a shamed face. "I was careless and left the key on the outside. Mr. Bracken should have scolded me but he didn't. We've been the best

friends and had the nicest time together and now it's going to be nicer because you're here."

She beamed on first one and then the other as she bustled about finding a plate and a knife and fork, making the toast that Mrs. Bracken thought she would prefer to bread and all the time talking in a friendly fashion. She never doubted that what interested her would interest others.

At first Mrs. Bracken regarded her helplessly, as Mr. Bracken had done, but gradually the look of irritation disappeared and at last a smile took its place. It was strange to share a lunch of boiled eggs and tea on the kitchen table with Joseph Bracken. She had not done that since they were first married and were moving into their first home. She hadn't thought of it for years but now it was oddly pleasant to remember the little details of a time before she had been absorbed by clubs and he by business. Neither she nor Mr. Bracken had much to say but Mary Rose talked enough for three. She waited on them with a solicitude that forced them to eat and when they had finished she sent them into the other room.

"I'll wash up. It won't take me a minute."

So, because she told them to, Mr. and Mrs. Bracken drifted into the other room and left her alone with Jenny Lind. Mr. Bracken did not take his hat and mutter that he would be back for dinner. He walked over to the window and stood looking down the street. At last he turned around and looked at his wife who was sitting on the davenport as if she were tired.

"Elsie," he said abruptly, "what ever became of your niece?"

She looked up in surprise. "You mean Harriet White? She's living with the Norrises in Prairieville."

"Wouldn't you like to have her here?" he asked suddenly. "It doesn't seem just right—decent—to let strangers look after your own relations."

Her eyes opened wider. He had never seemed to think whether it was decent or not until now. "But we can't have her here. That was the trouble after her mother died. Children aren't allowed in the house and we didn't want to move."

"How old is she?"

"Thirteen or fourteen. I'm not just sure which."

"A girl of thirteen isn't a child. Send for her, Elsie, and if anyone objects, we can move. But I guess a tenant means something to a landlord and there won't be any objections. We need her, Elsie, as much as she needs us. We need someone young with us. That kid," he nodded toward the kitchen where Mary Rose was lustily singing the many verses of "Where Have You Been, Billy Boy?" "has made me realize what we are missing. Why she fussed around me as if—as if," he colored slightly, "as if I were her father. No, it isn't anything new. I've been thinking for some time that we aren't getting all we should out of life. You give your time and strength to clubs and I give mine to business and what does it amount to? What are we working for? Abstract people aren't the same as your own flesh and blood. What we need is something to bring us together and if Hattie White is anything like that kid she'll keep us good and busy."

Mrs. Bracken slipped across the room and put her hand on his arm. "I'll be glad to send for her, Joe. I haven't felt just right to leave her with the Whites but I thought you didn't want

her and I told myself that my first duty was to you. I'll write today. No, I'll go for her, if you don't mind."

"That's a good girl." His arm slipped around her waist.

Out in the kitchen Mary Rose brought her song to an abrupt close. She thrust her head in the doorway. "I'm all through. Didn't I say it wouldn't take a jiffy? It's been very pleasant but Aunt Kate'll be wondering where I am and so will Grandma Johnson. Good-by."

"Good-by," they chorused. "Come again," they added, as if they couldn't help but speak the hospitable words.

"I shall," Mary Rose called back. "Sure, I'll come again."

CHAPTER XIII

AND Mr. Jerry said that if you weren't so much of an angel you'd be a splendid artist or if you weren't so much of an artist you'd be a splendid angel. It sounds queer the way I say it but I know he meant it for a compliment." Mary Rose and Jenny Lind were posing for the jam poster. It was almost finished and Mary Rose was sinfully proud of it.

Miss Thorley frowned and refused to say what she thought of Mr. Jerry's compliment. Mary Rose frowned, also.

"You don't like Mr. Jerry very much, do you?" she ventured to ask.

"I'm too busy to know whether I do or not." Miss Thorley half closed her eyes and looked at Mary Rose in the funny way she did when she was painting. "My work takes all of my time. Chin up, Mary Rose."

"Yes'm." Mary Rose tilted her chin a little

higher. "You aren't under any obligation to think of him, of course, but if your cat was boarding with him and he had borrowed your dog you'd just have to keep him in your mind and heart. And he's worth thinking of. He's a very fine young man. Everyone says so. Jimmie adores him and he hasn't known him a week. You've known him lots longer than that, haven't you?" She spoke as if she could not understand how Jimmie could be so much more clever. It must be on account of the spell that old Independence had put upon Miss Thorley. There couldn't be any other reason for not liking Mr. Jerry. He was so altogether likeable. Mary Rose sighed at life's complications. "I just love Mr. Jerry myself. I can't help it," she went on more slowly. "I wish you did, too," wistfully. "It's much more pleasant when the people you love will love each other. It gives you such a comfortable feeling as if you didn't care if Heaven was so far away. I do think this world would be almost as wonderful as Heaven if everyone would love everyone else."

"There is no doubt of that," Miss Thorley absently agreed with her.

"Then will you try and love my friends?" eagerly. She almost lost her pose in her eagerness. "I'll love yours. Every one! I will! I can because I have a big heart. Did you know that the more you put into a heart the more it will hold? It's the hearts that haven't anyone in them that are so little and hard. I think hearts must be like balloons. You can blow and blow and blow into balloons and there's always room for some more breath."

"Unless they break. Balloons break, Mary Rose, and so do hearts."

Mary Rose looked incredulous. "Mine never did. And anyway I'd rather have my heart break from being too full than get hard because it didn't have anyone in it. I'd like to have the very biggest heart in the whole world!" she cried ambitiously.

"Big enough to hold Mr. Wells? Did you know he was ill, Mary Rose? His Jap came up last night and asked Miss Carter not to play on the piano because Mr. Wells wasn't well and didn't wish to be disturbed." Miss Thorley's lip curled disdainfully.

"Mr. Wells sick?" Mary Rose was much concerned. "What's the matter?"

Miss Thorley shook her head.

"Haven't you been down to ask?" Mary Rose always had been sent to ask in Mifflin.

"Gracious, no! I shouldn't dare. He'd probably bite my head off."

"He couldn't bite your head off if he was sick. It doesn't seem real neighborly, Miss Thorley. And you are neighbors. You live right over his head. I expect he has dyspepsia and that's the reason he looked so—" she hesitated over a word, "unfriendly. Why when Mr. Lewis, he's the postmaster in Mifflin, had dyspepsia Mrs. Lewis didn't dare say her soul was her own. Mr. Lewis couldn't be cross to people when they came for their mail so he saved it all for Mrs. Lewis. That doesn't seem quite fair, does it, for people to be pleasant to outsiders and save their bad temper for their homes?"

"It isn't fair but I rather think it's human."

Mary Rose shook her head. "Sometimes I think that human and disagreeable mean the same thing because people all say the bad things we do

are human. Where did we learn them, Miss Thorley? The Lord made us all good because it wouldn't have paid him to make us bad. Where do you suppose Mr. Lewis learned to snap and Mr. Wells to scold and you to frown?"

Miss Thorley certainly did have a frown. It ran right across her pretty forehead when she said: "Bless me! child, how do I know? That's enough for one day." She put the drawing board on the table and stretched herself luxuriously. "Try and be on time tomorrow, Mary Rose, and I think we can finish it."

"Yes'm." Mary Rose stared at the drawing which was a very wonderful thing to her. "Don't you believe Mr. Bingham Henderson 'll be pleased with it? It's a beautiful picture of Jenny Lind."

"It's a beautiful picture of you, if I do say it," laughed the artist.

Mary Rose drew closer until she could whisper into Miss Thorley's ear. "I wish Mr. Jerry could see it."

Miss Thorley rose abruptly and pushed her away. "He can. He'll have lots of opportunity

to see it when it is on the back of a magazine. Run along, now. Skip!" She fairly pushed Mary Rose out of the door before she could say anything more about Mr. Jerry. Sometimes it seemed to Mary Rose that Miss Thorley was afraid to hear about Mr. Jerry.

She went down the stairs slowly and hesitated when she came to Mr. Wells' door. She knew she should stop and inquire how he was. It would have been a terrible breach of good manners in Mifflin not to ask after a sick neighbor, but Mr. Wells had not been like any neighbor Mary Rose had ever known. Nevertheless he was a neighbor. She tossed her head and ventured closer to the door. There was no answer when she knocked timidly and she tried again. The door was slightly ajar and when her second knock brought no response she ventured to push it open an inch. Mr. Wells might be all alone and need someone. She would just slip in and see. If he didn't she could slip out again.

There was a chilly deserted feeling in the hall that made Mary Rose shiver. She hurried through softly as if in the presence of something that

oppressed her. When she reached the door of the living-room she stopped and looked across into the amazed eyes of Mr. Wells, who was lying on the broad couch.

"Oh!" Mary Rose refused to be frightened away by his scowl. "I'm so glad you're able to be up. You are better, aren't you? I was worried when Miss Thorley said you were sick and I just stopped to inquire. In Mifflin when anyone was sick we always went with chicken broth or cup custard or a new magazine. Why, when Lily Thompson had tonsilitis she had eleven different things sent in one day. I helped her eat the eating ones."

"How did you get in?" growled Mr. Wells for all the world like the Big Bear in the story of Goldilocks. Mary Rose had to think what a splendid Big Bear he would make.

"The door was open. I knocked but no one came. I was afraid you might want something. Has your Japanese gentleman gone to the drug store? Isn't it lonely for you all by yourself? I was going to ask Aunt Kate to make you some beef tea but perhaps you'd rather have Jenny

Lind stay with you. She's splendid company and I'd be glad to loan her to you." She crossed the room to put the cage down beside Mr. Wells. Jenny Lind began to sing immediately as if to show Mr. Wells what splendid company she could be.

Mr. Wells raised himself on his elbow and shook a threatening fist at the canary.

"Take that damn bird away!" he shouted. His face was red and Mary Rose was sure she could see flames darting from his eyes.

"Yes, sir! Yes, sir!" She snatched Jenny Lind at once. "I s-suppose she is too noisy for you yet. Mrs. Mason didn't like her when she had the nerves. But you shouldn't be alone. It's bad for you. I'm sure you need friendly company. Oh, I know the very thing!" And before the astonished and indignant invalid could say a word she had dashed out of the room.

He could hear her stumble in the hall but he did not hear her exclaim hurriedly when a door across the way opened: "Oh, Mrs. Rawson, will you take Jenny Lind for a minute? I'll be right back for her." She pushed the hook of the cage

into the hands of the startled Mrs. Rawson and flew down the stairs.

She was back in an incredibly short time with a small glass globe that she carried very carefully. Her face shone as she tiptoed in and placed it on the table beside the invalid.

"There!" she said proudly. "There! The perfect pets for the sickroom. When you said Jenny Lind was too disturbing I remembered that Mr. Jerry's Aunt Mary had these two little gold-fish. Wasn't it lucky? She was glad to loan them to you and hopes you'll find them pleasant friends. They won't be any care at all. I'll come up every day and feed them if you don't feel well enough. I'd like to. Aren't they beautiful? Do you suppose all the fish in Heaven are like that, all gold and glisteny? Won't you just love to watch them? They can't sing or make any noise to annoy you. They'll be splendid company."

"God bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Wells helplessly, when he could find breath to murmur anything. He stared at her as if he really had never seen her before.

An exclamation, like the pop of a gun, made

them look at the doorway where Sako was staring at them as if he could not believe his eyes.

"Sako!" shouted Mr. Wells, angrily. "Why did you leave the door open when you went out?"

"Wasn't it lucky he did?" asked Mary Rose, standing before him and rocking on her heels and toes as she often did when she was pleased. "I might never have come in, if he hadn't. If there's anything I can do for you, Mr. Wells, any time, don't you hesitate to ask me. Just send the Japanese gentleman right down. I live in the cellar, I mean the basement, with Aunt Kate and Uncle Larry and we'll all be only too glad to do anything to help you get well. It's horrid to be sick. You look better, I think," critically, and indeed he was not at all pale now. He had so much color in his face that he was almost purple. "I must go now and get Jenny Lind. I left her with Mrs. Rawson. I expect she thought I was crazy," with a giggle as she remembered Mrs. Rawson's amazed face.

"I'll bet she did!" Mr. Wells stared after her as if he, too, thought Mary Rose was crazy She turned in the doorway to wave her hand to him

and he watched her out of sight. Then he looked at the goldfish. He had half a mind to tell Sako to throw them out. What did he want with a couple of damned goldfish? The child was a nuisance, an unmitigated nuisance. Children always were. That was why he lived in the Washington where they were forbidden. He would have to ask the agents what they meant by letting the place be overrun with children when there was a clause in every lease forbidding it. Mary Rose might be a friendly little soul, she might mean well, but she was an unmitigated nuisance. The Lord only knew what she would do next if she remained in the building. And she had dared to talk back to him in front of people. No, he would see that the lease was lived up to. It was his right. If he demanded protection against Mary Rose, an impudent interfering chit, he fumed, the agents would have to protect him.

"Sako!" he called sharply. "Take these damned goldfish down to the Donovans. And tell Donovan to keep his niece at home. I won't have her here!"

CHAPTER XIV

THROUGH Bob Strahan, Jimmie obtained a paper route. Mr. Jerry's Aunt Mary insisted that was work enough for him at present.

"A growing boy has to have plenty of time to eat and sleep," she said, "and no one is using that attic bedroom."

"You can earn your board taking care of the lawn and lending a hand with the car. The paper route 'll stand you in for clothes and spending money," suggested Mr. Jerry. "Might as well take it easy while you can."

"He's a prince, that's what he is!" Jimmie told Mary Rose somewhat chokingly, when she came over to see how George Washington and Solomon and Jimmie were doing. "I never knew such a man."

"Didn't you?" Mary Rose was surprised. "Mr. Jerry is splendid but there are lots and lots of splendid people in the world, Jimmie Bronson."

"Oh, are there!" snorted Jimmie. "Well, I haven't seen so many of them, and that's straight. Judging from what I saw and heard that first day I was in Waloo, you've run across at least one of the other sort, too."

Mary Rose blushed. Her inability to make friends with Mr. Wells annoyed her. "He's got dyspepsia," she said, as if that were an excuse. "To tell you the truth, Jimmie Bronson, when I first came here I nearly died. I had an awful time remembering that daddy said when there were so many people in the world there were friends for everybody. The people were so different and it was so funny to have them live up and down instead of side by side. At first I thought I'd never get used to it but I did. And I have lots of friends here now. But Waloo isn't Mifflin." And she sighed because it wasn't.

"Mifflin!" jeered Jimmie. "Mifflin! You can be mighty good and glad it isn't. I don't know where you got your idea of Mifflin, Mary Rose, for it's about the deadest one-horse town I ever ran across. And the people. Huh! A collection of boneheads."

"Why, Jimmie Bronson!" gasped Mary Rose. "Mifflin's the friendliest town—"

"Friendly!" Jimmie elevated his nose at the word. "Prying, interfering, gossiping! That's what it is. I guess I know. You're all wrong, Mary Rose, all wrong. If you should go back you'd see. You're nothing but a kid. You don't know. But take it from me you've got entirely the wrong idea of your native town. If Mifflin was what you think it was do you imagine Solomon and I would have left? No, siree! We'd have stayed and been part of the happy crowd. But it isn't. Honest! It's dead and narrow and one-horse and the people are boneheads."

Mary Rose could not believe it. She stared at him and her lip quivered.

"Jimmie," she said at last and her voice was very low and shaky, "is that what you want me to think of Mifflin? It's always been a wonderful place to me. You see I was born there and no other city, no matter how grand it is, can be my birthplace. It doesn't seem as if I could be all wrong about it. And the people! Daddy always said people's hearts were friendly and in Mifflin

their faces were friendly, too. Yes, they were, Jimmie Bronson, when I lived there. Perhaps they have changed. It's a long time since I left."

Jimmie gave a whoop. "Long time! It isn't two months. And it would take more than sixty days to put that sour look on old Mr. Mallow's face. He nearly ate me up alive when I asked for a job after Aunt Nora died. No, Mary Rose, you're wrong, all wrong, about Mifflin. There isn't any place in this whole world that's like what you think that old burg is."

"Isn't there, Jimmie?" Mary Rose was very troubled. "Is that what I'm really to believe?"

There was a quiver in her voice that made James Bronson turn and look at her. He flushed all over his freckled face, to the very roots of his red hair. He even put out his tanned hand and patted Mary Rose's arm. "No, Mary Rose," he said slowly. "I guess you're right. You're always looking for friends and so you'll find them. You keep on being a silly simp and thinking of Mifflin as the new Jerusalem and perhaps it'll grow into one."

"It would if everyone thought it would," Mary

Rose insisted and the troubled look slipped away from her face. "If people feel friendly they'll find friends."

"And she believes it," Jimmie told Mr. Jerry when they were cleaning the car together that evening. "Gosh, aren't girl kids queer! I couldn't tell her the truth but I guess I know Mifflin better than she does."

"I'm glad you didn't tell her the truth, Jim." Mr. Jerry lighted his pipe and gave Jimmie the hose. "She'll learn soon enough."

"Of course she will," agreed Jimmie. "She's just got to find out that folks aren't going up and down the streets holding out the glad hand. That's what I say, Mr. Jerry, if people feel so friendly inside why don't they show it outside? Gee whiz!" he stopped to squeeze the water out of the big sponge. "Wouldn't it be a great old world if they did, if folks were what Mary Rose thinks they are?"

"It would. And as every little bit added to what there is makes a little bit more you could help the good time along by feeling a bit more friendly to the world yourself, James," advised

Mr. Jerry, stepping off to look at the car. "Mary Rose is right when she says that smiles are just as catching as frowns. Take it from me that it never makes a bad thing any worse by thinking that it is better than it is."

Jimmie Bronson's opinion of Mifflin bothered Mary Rose and she discussed it with everyone. It was not until they had all agreed with her that people and places are what you think they are that she felt comfortable again.

"I knew I was right all the time," she told Aunt Kate.

"If folks were really what she thinks they are, what a snap we'd have," Aunt Kate said to Uncle Larry, after Mary Rose had gone to bed. "To be honest I'll have to admit that the atmosphere's a mite pleasanter here but whether that's because of Mary Rose or because I haven't seen quite so much of the tenants—I never do in summer—I can't say. Seems if she does have the faculty of bringing out the kind side of folks. If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes I never would have believed that Mrs. Rawson would have loaned her machine to Mrs. Matchan or that Mrs.

Matchan would condescend to borrow it. Land, the rows they've had over that machine and that piano! Perhaps there is somethin' in thinkin' folks are friendly. What do you say, Larry?"

"What's thinkin' done for old Wells?" asked Uncle Larry. "He's worse'n ever. Take my word for it, Kate, he'll make trouble for us. You might as well begin to pack."

CHAPTER XV

MRS. DONOVAN looked with admiration at the sheer linen blouse that Miss Thorley handed her.

"Sure, I'll do it up for you the very best I know how an' seems if you can't expect a body to do more than that. If all of us who are in the world just did our best it would be a different place than it is, now wouldn't it? What's ailin' you, Miss Thorley? Seems if you don't look so hearty as you did. Don't you work too hard. It's what you have in your heart more'n what you have in your pocketbook that makes happiness. A pretty young thing like you hain't no business to be thinkin' of jam all the time. I hear you're makin' oodles of money drawin' pictures for Mr. Bingham Henderson but let me tell you, my girl, you can't make good red blood no matter how much money you have. There's only one can do that."

"Who's that, Aunt Kate?" Mary Rose hungered for the information, as she leaned against the table. "Who can make good red blood?"

"God Almighty, honey, an' he's the only one. Land, I remember Jim Peaslie took a dozen raw eggs a day, a quart of cream an' beefsteak so raw it dripped blood but he couldn't make none of those red corpuskles an' so there wasn't nothin' for him to do but die an' he died. A body can't live without plenty of red corpuskles an' by that same token, a girl has got to have somethin' beside work. That's gospel true, Miss Thorley. My ol' father used to say you robbed the ol' when you took pleasures from the young an', seems if, that's gospel true, too. Land, if I hadn't had good times when I was a girl to remember sometimes I'd go crazy. Layin' up pleasant memories is what everyone can do an' it means as much as money in the bank. This is pretty lace on your waist, Miss Thorley. I dunno as I ever saw just this pattern."

"It's imported," Miss Thorley told her listlessly as she lingered in the cosy kitchen. She was pale and her eyes were dull. She was tired, she

told herself impatiently. The summer had been hot and she had worked hard. It irritated her that the keen eyes of Mrs. Donovan saw that she was not happy but how could she be happy when she had so many things to annoy her? She should be happy, she was independent, she had work, the two things that had seemed so necessary to happiness but recently she had been conscious of a desire for something more. It made her furious to be restless and discontented and so listless and colorless that people noticed it.

Mrs. Donovan snorted at the imported lace. "That's it. Girls nowadays think 't fine clothes 'll make 'em happy. An imported waist costs more'n one made in Waloo an' it keeps a girl strong enough to work for the silk stockin's she's got to have," she said with scorn. "I don't wonder there's so many bach'lors when I figure how much money it costs now to dress a girl."

"Is that why men are bachelors?" asked astonished Mary Rose. "Mr. Jerry is a bachelor, his Aunt Mary told him so right in front of me. She doesn't like it in him. And Mr. Strahan's one and Jimmie Bronson and Mr. Wells and Mr.

Jarvis. Why, what a lot of bachelors are right under this very roof!"

"That's just it," laughed Mrs. Donovan. " 'Stead of havin' so many bach'lor flats in Waloo there oughta be more fam'ly cottages."

"There's Mr. Jerry now." Mary Rose ran to the window to wave her hand to her friend as he drove his car up the alley. Solomon was with him and he looked quite as well on the front seat as Mr. Jerry had hoped he would. "I could have asked him if that was why he was a bachelor if he hadn't gone away."

Miss Thorley crossed the kitchen and stood beside her. She saw the automobile turn the corner and disappear down the cross street.

"Mary Rose," she suddenly put her arm around the small shoulders beside her. "Do you know I've never seen George Washington."

"You haven't?" Mary Rose twisted around and looked up into her face. "Oh, you must see him. He's such a wonderful cat. But I can't bring him here. It's against the law, you know. Would you—Oh, would you!—come across the alley and see him in his boarding house? You

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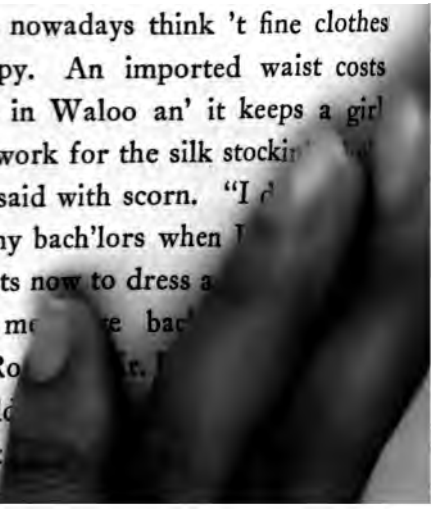

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know he's only a cat," she explained slowly as if she were afraid that Miss Thorley might expect to find George Washington something more. "But he's wonderful just the same. He earns his own board, every single drop. Mr. Jerry's Aunt Mary said so."

Miss Thorley and Aunt Kate smiled at each other above Mary Rose's yellow head.

"I've never seen a self-supporting cat," Miss Thorley laughed. "I should love to meet George Washington." She did not understand why she would love to meet him now, why she wished to go across to Jerry Longworthy's back yard, when until that afternoon nothing could have induced her to go there.

"Come on." Mary Rose put out an eager hand and Miss Thorley took it in hers. They were halfway across the alley when Mary Rose stopped. "I forgot," she said, and her face was troubled. "I promised to let Mr. Jerry know when you'd come."

"It's too late to tell him now. We saw him go off in the car." Miss Thorley did not explain that that was the reason she was willing to call on

George Washington. "I shall be very busy after today, Mary Rose. I might not be able to come again for several weeks."

"Is that so?" Mary Rose looked less doubtful. "Perhaps I can explain that to Mr. Jerry." She led the way into Mr. Jerry's spacious yard. "I expect George Washington's inside," she said when they failed to find him outside.

"Run in and bring him out," suggested Miss Thorley, sitting down in one of the wicker chairs that were under the big apple tree that had lived there ever since Waloo had been some man's farm.

Mary Rose disappeared but before Miss Thorley had looked half over the yard she was back. "He's asleep," she said in a loud whisper. "Do come in and see him. He looks perfectly beautiful with a fern at his head and a bunch of asters at his feet. Please, come." She took Miss Thorley's hand and tried to pull her to her feet.

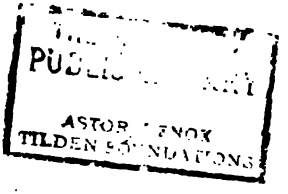
Miss Thorley did not wish to go into the house. She had had no intention of doing more than to slip into the yard for a moment. Now that she was there she felt uncomfortably conscious. But

Mr. Jerry was away, she had seen him go with her own eyes. It would be interesting to see his home. Or perhaps the picture Mary Rose had described, a sleeping cat with a fern at his head and asters at his feet, was alluring. Whichever it was she allowed Mary Rose to lead her in at the side door, through the dining-room that seemed far too large for only Mr. Jerry and his Aunt Mary, into the big living-room that had begun life as a front and back parlor. There on the wide window seat was the self-supporting cat, George Washington himself, with a fern spreading its feathery fronds above his head and a cluster of red asters in a brass bowl at his tail. George Washington had calculated the amount of space between the jardinière and the bowl to a nicety. There was not the fraction of an inch to spare.

"There!" Mary Rose pointed a proud finger as she stopped before the window.

"He is a beauty," Miss Thorley was honest enough to say. Her sense of color was delighted at the play of sunshine on George Washington's gray overcoat which had caught a warm glow

"There on the wide window seat was the self-supporting cat."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from the red asters. "Wake him up, Mary Rose. You really can't see a cat asleep any more than you can a baby."

"Shall I?" Mary Rose would never in the world have disturbed a sleeping baby and for the same reason she hesitated before a sleeping cat. And while she hesitated Mr. Jerry's Aunt Mary came in and their voices woke George Washington. He sprang up, artfully eluding bowl and ferns, and stood in the sunlight stretching himself. He looked at Mary Rose and at Miss Thorley and at Mr. Jerry's Aunt Mary with his calm yellow eyes.

"That's a lot better than waking him," Mary Rose clapped her hands. "I can't bear to waken anyone for fear of interrupting a dream. Sometimes," she went on thoughtfully, "I'd give most anything to know what's inside of George Washington's mind. He looks so wise. Isn't he splendid?" she asked Miss Thorley, who had flushed uncomfortably when Mr. Jerry's Aunt Mary came in and who now was standing rather stiffly conscious, wishing with all her heart she had never come. Mary Rose caught her cat and brought

him to Miss Thorley. "You tell her how self-supporting he is?" she asked Mr. Jerry's Aunt Mary in a voice that reeked with pride.

"I think I can tell that story better than Aunt Mary." And lo and behold, there was Mr. Jerry himself in the doorway, an unusual color in his brown cheeks, a reproachful look in his eye.

Miss Thorley's face had more color than usual, also, as she bowed coldly, but Mary Rose flew to take his hand.

"I'm so glad you came back. We saw you drive away but we had to come now for Miss Thorley's going to be so awfully busy that she couldn't come for weeks and weeks."

"Is she?" Mr. Jerry looked oddly at Miss Thorley, but Miss Thorley refused to look at him. "The best laid plans of mice and men," he said meaningly and paused until Mary Rose squeezed his hand.

"Are you telling her about George Washington?" she whispered.

He laughed and after a moment a faint smile lifted the corners of Miss Thorley's lips. Mr. Jerry drew a sigh of relief and sat down.

"That's better," he said. "No, Mary Rose, I was not just then referring to George Washington, but I can assure you that he is untiringly on the job. He brought a dead mouse to me at six o'clock this morning. At six o'clock!" impressively. "I thought I had the nightmare when I opened my eyes and saw old George standing there with a mouse in his mouth. He's working overtime. He should take a rest. He'll injure his health if he attends too strictly to business, Mary Rose."

"I know." Mary Rose nodded a wise head. "Too much work doesn't make good red blood. Aunt Kate was just telling us, wasn't she, Miss Thorley, that all the money you make won't buy good times nor red blood. She was telling us that very thing not ten minutes ago." Mary Rose was overjoyed to hear Mr. Jerry confirm what Aunt Kate had said. Now, of course, Miss Thorley would have to believe that it was true.

"Your Aunt Kate is a very wise, wise woman. It's a pity others can't see it." He sighed and looked at Miss Thorley, who stroked George

Washington's gray overcoat and refused to lift her eyes to meet his.

"If they could they'd have old heads on young shoulders, perhaps," suggested Mary Rose. "You wouldn't like that, would you? Just suppose Mrs. Schuneman's head was on Miss Thorley's shoulders. How would you like that?"

"I shouldn't like it at all. I shouldn't want any head on Miss Thorley's shoulders but her very own. It suits me there—perfectly." Mr. Jerry eyed Miss Thorley rather critically and screwed his eyes half shut as Miss Thorley did when she was looking at the model she was painting, and his voice was as firm as a voice could be. "Even to have her as wise as your Aunt Kate I shouldn't want her to have Mrs. Schuneman's head."

"And just suppose you had Mr. Wells' head and he had yours?" giggled Mary Rose.

Mr. Jerry tweaked her pink ear. "Mr. Wells wouldn't keep my head for a minute. Perhaps it is just as well to leave heads where they are."

"I used to want to change mine," Mary Rose confided to them soberly. "You know I've mil-

lions of freckles and my hair's as straight as a string. Nobody ever thinks I'm pretty like Gladys. One day Mrs. Evans told me that pretty is as pretty does and for almost a week I did my best to do pretty, the very prettiest I knew how. But no one ever stopped and said, 'What a beautiful child,' as they do when they see Gladys. Gladys is afraid of dogs and she screams when she sees a mouse. She's even afraid of her tables. So I tried to think I had more real good times by being brave instead of beautiful. Oh!" she broke off with a squeal of delight, for Mr. Jerry's Aunt Mary brought in a pitcher of lemonade and a plate of little cakes gay with white and pink frosting. "Oh, Miss Thorley! aren't you glad now that you came?"

CHAPTER XVI

LONG before school began Mary Rose had established an acquaintance, if not a friendship, with all the people who lived in the Washington. Not only did she know them herself, but she was the means of many of them knowing others. Mrs. Schuneman and Mrs. Johnson often went to the park together now to feed the squirrels which Mary Rose was firmly convinced the Lord had placed there for those who could not have pets in their homes. Mrs. Matchan had promised to play at one of Mrs. Bracken's club meetings and Mrs. Rawson and her machine were making garments for the children's ward of the new hospital in which Mrs. Willoughby had become interested.

Until Mary Rose came neither Miss Adams nor Mrs. Smith knew that the other was a slave to the crochet hook. Mary Rose arranged an exchange of patterns and when a pineapple border proved

too complicated to be worked out alone she brought expert aid and Miss Adams no longer hated the Washington. It was Mary Rose who discovered that old Mr. Jarvis and young Mr. Wilcox were graduates of the same college and that Mr. Blake's grandfather and Mrs. Bracken's grandmother had once sung in the same church choir. Miss Carter and Bob Strahan were often seen strolling together and more than once they had transported Mary Rose to the seventh heaven of delight by taking her to a moving picture show.

Mary Rose's friendliness had had an effect with the maids as well as the mistresses. When she had found Mrs. Johnson's Hilda crying because she didn't know anyone in Waloo and was so homesick and lonesome she didn't think she'd stay, Mary Rose went down and asked Mrs. Schuneman's Mina if she wouldn't please be a little friendly to a new friend of hers.

Mina had stared at her with her big china blue eyes and said she wouldn't do it for anyone else, but since Mary Rose had come Mrs. Schuneman had let up a little on her everlasting nagging, so

she felt she owed her a favor and she'd go up that very evening.

It was Mary Rose who soothed Ida at Mrs. Rawson's when she took it into her head that she could not work in the same building with a Japanese.

"You're a Norwegian, aren't you, Ida? So you're a foreigner just as Mr. Sako is. I suppose he thinks Norwegians are just as strange as you think Japanese. Countries are like families, I guess; you think your own is the best in the world. But I don't believe that God was so good to the Norwegians that he made them the best. He had to divide the good things just as I do when I have any candy. I give some to Aunt Kate and some to Uncle Larry and once I gave a chocolate to you, Ida. I wish you'd try and be polite to Mr. Sako. You don't need to be intimate friends if you don't want to. Just think what a splendid chance you have to learn about Japan."

Ida had stared at her as Lena had done, but she told Mrs. Rawson that she'd changed her mind and she wouldn't leave on account of any Jap, she wouldn't be driven away by any yellow man.

She guessed that Norwegians were as good as Japanese any day.

There were many things that puzzled Mary Rose but almost as many that pleased her.

"I've enjoyed living in Waloo," she told Mr. Jerry one evening as they sat under the apple tree. "I didn't think I would at first. I thought I'd die to have to live in a place where there couldn't be any children nor any pets, but everyone's so friendly I mean—almost every one. I do think the Lord did just right when he made people instead of stopping, as he might have done, with horses and lions and monkeys. Did you ever think how strange it would be if there wasn't any you nor any Miss Thorley nor any Mrs. Schuneman nor any Mr. Wells," she spoke the last name in a whisper, "but just animals and vegetables and birds? Sometimes I can't understand how the Lord ever did think of making so many different things. I suppose it was just because He was the Lord. That's what Aunt Kate said when I asked her. But I shall be glad to go to school, Mr. Jerry, because then I'll know some children. You know in Mifflin I played almost

all the time with children, Gladys and Mary Mallow and Lucy Norris and Harry Mann and lots of others, but here I don't seem to know anyone but grown-ups. They're very nice grown-ups. I just love you, Mr. Jerry, and your Aunt Mary and the enchanted princess! Do you think you'll ever be able to break the spell of that wicked witch Independence?" anxiously. "You know I don't think she's just happy. Aunt Kate doesn't either. She thinks it's red corpuscles but I really believe it's that Independence. We must do something, Mr. Jerry. And I love Miss Carter and Mr. Strahan and Mrs. Schuneman and Grandma Johnson and everybody else. Isn't a heart the biggest thing? Mine has room for Jenny Lind and George Washington and Solomon and all the other pets I ever had or even will have and for all the people that were made. It's—it's—" she frowned—"very elastic, isn't it? You have an elastic one, too, Mr. Jerry, or you'd never have taken in George Washington and Solomon and Jimmie Bronson. You're a bachelor, aren't you?"

Mr. Jerry looked quite dazed as he attempted

to keep up with Mary Rose's subjects. He sighed as he acknowledged that he was a bachelor.

"Is it because when you look at a girl you see how much she costs?" Mary Rose had worried over that. "Because really Miss Thorley doesn't cost so much. She told Aunt Kate she didn't. She said appearances were deceitful and the most costly looking girls were often the cheapest. Of course, you needn't tell me if you don't want to," remembering, alas, too late, that Miss Thorley had told her that one should not ask personal questions. She drew a deep sigh. "I'm so full, just so plumb full of questions I've got to spill some of them out once in a while."

"To be sure you have!" Mr. Jerry was the most understanding person. "When I was your age I was nothing but a walking question."

"Weren't you?" admiringly. "And did people answer your questions? They usually say to me, 'Run along, child, I'm busy' or 'Never mind that now, you'll know soon enough.' It's a very, very puzzling world, isn't it, with so many things you don't understand. That's another reason I'm so glad to go to school. The day after the

day after the day after tomorrow, Mr. Jerry, my Aunt Kate's going to take me. I've never been to a city school so I can imagine it's just like a palace with gold seats for the children and thrones for the teachers who are all fairy princesses with beautiful golden hair and white satin dresses."

"Mary Rose! Oh, Mary Rose!" Mr. Jerry regarded her sadly. "You are a living proof that anticipation is greater than any old participation. I'm only doing you a kindness when I tell you that there is not a golden seat for any child in the Lincoln School. There isn't even one throne. And if you don't have an old witch for a teacher instead of a golden-haired fairy I'm a goat. I tell you this for your own good, Mary Rose, believe me."

Mary Rose shook her head until her hair refused to stay in the ribbon Aunt Kate had tied on it. "All the same I'm going to believe in the golden seats. They are pleasant things to think of."

It was the next day that she was in the hall with Jenny Lind. They had been calling on Mrs. Schuneman and Germania and had had a pleasant

time. Mary Rose had eaten two pieces of coffee cake and drunk a glass of ginger ale and Jenny Lind had had a crumb of coffee cake which seemed to be all she cared for.

Mrs. Schuneman had told Mary Rose a great secret, that Lottie was going to be married to the brother of one of her bridge-playing friends and that Mary Rose might come to the wedding. Mary Rose was so excited she could scarcely speak. She had never been to a wedding in all of her "going on fourteen" years.

"I've been to three funerals and a revival meeting—" ecstasy made her voice tremble—"but I've never been to a wedding. Gladys went to one and she said it was grand. Her grandmother cried all the time and her grandfather blew his nose six times. Gladys counted. Oh, Mrs. Schuneman, will Miss Lottie really invite me? It would be something," and she clasped her hands as she stood in front of Mrs. Schuneman, "for me to remember all of my life!"

"Sure, she'll invite you, you and Jenny Lind. She can hang in the window with Germania and sing for the bride."

Mary Rose threw herself against Mrs. Schuneman. "I wouldn't exchange you for Cinderella's godmother!" she half sobbed. "I'd rather go to a wedding than have a dozen pumpkin coaches. Jenny Lind and I can't tell you how obliged we are."

She was in a whirl of excitement as she shut the door. She heard her name called softly from above and looking up she saw Miss Carter's face smiling down at her from the third floor.

"Oh, Mary Rose, honey," came the soft whisper. "There's a package there for me, parcel post. You know they don't come up. Will you bring it to me? I'm not dressed to go down. Do, there's a love!"

Mary Rose ran into the vestibule and found a parcel addressed to Miss Blanche Carter. It was rather a large package and Mary Rose's arms were not so long as they would be some day. She looked dubiously from the package to Jenny Lind.

"You'll just have to stay by yourself a minute, Jenny Lind. It's lucky for you that the law doesn't let the cats come into this house."

She put the cage on the flat top of the newel

post and, taking Miss Carter's package in her arms, she went up as fast as she could. She had to tell Miss Carter of Lottie Schuneman's wedding and of the invitation that she and Jenny Lind were to receive, and Miss Carter had to open the parcel and show the contents to Mary Rose, so that it was several minutes instead of one before Mary Rose ran downstairs.

The newel post was empty. There was no bird cage with a yellow canary, on it. Mary Rose couldn't believe there wasn't and looked again. She was frightened.

"Jenny Lind!" she called. "Jenny Lind!"

Perhaps someone had taken the cage to tease her. Perhaps there had been a new law and birds were not allowed in the house. Perhaps a cat had slipped in regardless of the fact that cats were forbidden. But no cat could have carried the cage out of the front door. Mary Rose wrung her hands in horror and ran to knock at Mrs. Schuneman's door. Mrs. Schuneman cried out in dismay.

"Why didn't you leave her with me?"

"I didn't want to bother you when you'd been

so kind," faltered Mary Rose. "Where can she be? Perhaps Uncle Larry took her home."

But neither Uncle Larry nor Aunt Kate had taken Jenny Lind to the basement flat. Aunt Kate shook her head when Mary Rose told what had happened and followed her up to look at the empty newel post. She could only suggest feebly that someone must have taken the bird. "For a joke," she added when she saw Mary Rose's frightened face.

"A nice kind of a joke to frighten a child to death," grunted Mrs. Schuneman. "Here, Mary Rose, we'll knock on every door and ask. I'll go with you and if anyone is playing a joke they'll stop when they see me."

She looked quite grim enough to frighten any joker as they went from door to door. But no one had seen Jenny Lind. No one had heard of her. Mrs. Johnson and Grandma Johnson and Mrs. Rawson and Mrs. Willoughby came out on the second-floor landing and said what a shame it was, and on the third floor Mrs. Matchan and Miss Adams and Miss Proctor and Miss Carter talked together and tried to comfort Mary Rose.

But all the talking on all three floors did not bring Jenny Lind back. Mary Rose pressed her face close to Aunt Kate and tried not to cry and to believe the conscience-stricken Miss Carter when she said that Jenny Lind was all right, they'd find her before Mary Rose could say Jack Robinson.

"She's all I had here of my very own," hiccoughed Mary Rose; "I had to board out my cat and loan my dog. I've had her for years and years. It doesn't seem just fair for anyone to take her from me."

"You can have Germania," promised Mrs. Schuneman, to the surprise of all who heard her. "I'll be busy with the wedding and won't have time to take care of her," she added kindly so that Mary Rose would think it was a favor to take her bird.

"But Germania's yours and Jenny Lind was—was mine. They can't ever be the same, though I'm much obliged, Mrs. Schuneman. Oh, where can she be, Aunt Kate? Where can she be?"

"Yes, where can she be?" repeated Grandma Johnson helplessly.

"We'll advertise," promised Bob Strahan, who had come in and heard the sad story of Jenny Lind's disappearance. "Just you keep a stiff upper lip, Mary Rose. We'll find your bird."

They were all talking at once and advising Mary Rose to keep her upper lip stiff when Mr. Wells slammed the door behind him. He stopped when he saw the group around the newel post.

"What's the matter?" he scowled, and his voice was like the bark of a dog to Mrs. Donovan's nervous ear. "What's the matter?"

t was Mrs. Schuneman who told him. She had never dared to speak to him before. He looked oddly from one to the other and last of all at Mary Rose whose upper lip just wouldn't stay stiff.

"It is only what you should expect," he said, as he went on up the stairs. "Pets are not allowed in this building."

"I wish grouches weren't," muttered Bob Strahan to Miss Carter, who was almost as tearful as Mary Rose.

"Brute!" she answered. "If he had been here

I should think he had something to do with Jenny Lind's disappearance."

"That Jap of his was here," suggested Bob Strahan, but no one paid any attention to him then.

"Come down with me, dearie," whispered Aunt Kate, whose ruddy cheeks had lost their color under the cold stare of Mr. Wells. "We mustn't make any disturbance here. Come down an' tell Uncle Larry. P'rhaps he can help us."

"It's not—not knowing where she is or what's happened to her," Mary Rose gulped. "If she was well and comfortable I'd—I'd try to be resigned, but when I don't know, Aunt Kate! When I don't know!"

"Nothing has happened to her," Bob Strahan said promptly. "No one would hurt Jenny Lind. She is a valuable bird. I expect she was stolen and we'll find her at a bird store. The thief would be sure to sell her right away, before he was caught. I'll look up the bird shops."

"Do!" begged Miss Carter, who wished from the very bottom of her heart that she had never asked Mary Rose to bring up her parcel post

package. "I have half a mind to go with you."

"Be generous and have a whole mind. Poor little kid," he looked after Mary Rose as Aunt Kate half carried her down. "It's a thundering shame. Lord! I'm almost ready to think old grouch Wells did have a hand in this. Did you see his face? He's had it in for Mary Rose ever since she came."

Aunt Kate sat down in the big rocker and drew Mary Rose close to her heart. "Don't you fret yourself, Mary Rose," she said with her lips against Mary Rose's tear-stained face. "We'll find Jenny Lind. Sure, we'll find her. Just you pretend she's gone for a visit. You've loaned her to 'most everyone in the buildin', just you pretend she's loaned now."

"It's easy enough to pretend when you don't have to, Aunt Kate, but it isn't so easy when you know the truth," sobbed Mary Rose.

When Uncle Larry heard what had happened he shut his jaws with a click and a stern look came into his mild blue eyes.

"Of course someone took her," he said, patting Mary Rose's shoulder with a comforting hand.

"But don't you worry, Mary Rose. A janitor can go into any flat in this building, so if someone is hiding her for fun or meanness I'll find out. An' if it's anyone outside, well, what are the police for if not to help folks? I'll just speak to Officer Murphy to be on the safe side."

He seemed so helpful and confident that Mary Rose stopped crying and tried to feel confident, also.

"Perhaps someone in the house did take her for company, but I think it would have been more polite if they'd said something to me," she murmured.

"It's more likely that one of the old cranks thought the bird was a nuisance and wrung its neck," frowned Uncle Larry when he spoke to Aunt Kate alone. He did not seem half so confident as when he had spoken to Mary Rose. "There are folks not so many miles away who'd not stop to think whether they broke a kid's heart or not so long as they had their way. I declare, Kate, I'm 'most sorry you didn't leave her in Mifflin. From all she says folks were kind to her there."

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"Well, I'm not sorry!" Aunt Kate's voice was emphatic. "It breaks my heart to have her hurt, but we'll just have to keep remindin' her of what she has left, although it seems if it was little enough. First her mother an' then her father, her cat put out to board an' her dog the same as given away, an' now her bird's stolen. You might almost think that Providence was pickin' on the little thing."

CHAPTER XVII

JERRY LONGWORTHY went up the steps of the Washington and eyed the long row of mail boxes that ran down two sides of the vestibule, until he came to one whose card read, "Miss Elizabeth Thorley, Miss Blanche Carter." He touched the bell beneath.

"Is Miss Thorley in? This is Jerry Longworthy. I want to speak to you about Mary Rose."

"Oh, do come up!" The voice was very eager and hospitable as it came swiftly down the tube, and Mr. Jerry obeyed it almost as swiftly.

Miss Thorley met him in the hall on the third floor. She wore a little lingerie frock of white voile, tucked and inset with lace and girdled with pink satin. It was collarless and her hair was done high on her head so that little locks escaped from the pins and rested on her white neck. She looked about eighteen as she greeted Mr. Jerry.

He held her hand much longer than she thought was necessary and she flushed as she drew it from him. He looked around the big pleasant room as if he were glad to be in it.

"It's a long time since I was here," he said in a low voice, not as if he meant to say it but as if he had to.

It seemed long to her now, too, and when she answered, it was as Mr. Jerry had spoken, as if the words came of their own will.

"It is a long time." If Aunt Kate had seen her then she would not have worried over any lack of red "corpuskles." A goodly number of them slipped into Miss Thorley's face and dyed it pinker than her girdle.

A flame was lighted in Mr. Jerry's eyes and he stepped quickly forward. She shrank back behind the high morris chair and he stopped suddenly.

"Long enough to prove to you that love is the biggest thing in the world?" he asked gently, but there was a tremble in his voice that thrilled her down to her very heels. "Oh, my dear, has it? Work and independence are all well enough but

they can't take the place of love." His eyes watched her hungrily, but as the color left her cheeks as quickly as it had come and she shook her head, he went on more slowly and there was no longer a wistful tremble in his voice to thrill her to her heels. "You remember the night when you offered me friendship instead of love and I scornfully refused the half loaf?" She nodded almost mechanically, her eyes on her fingers as they pleated a fold of her frock. "Well, I've changed my mind. Mary Rose has shown me that friends may have a big place in one's life and if you can't give me anything more I'm going to be satisfied with your friendship. May I have that?" He held out his hand.

"Oh!" It was a startled little gasp and it was a startled little glance that she gave him. "Is—is that what you came for?" If his ears had been sharper he would have caught a tiny note of disappointment in the question as if she had expected him to ask for more.

"It isn't what I came for," he acknowledged honestly. "But I wanted to tell you so you wouldn't keep on avoiding me as if I had the

plague. The other afternoon you wouldn't have come over if you had thought I would be back?"

A red banner in each cheek convicted her.

"We're neighbors and friends of Mary Rose," he went on slowly, "so we'll doubtless meet more or less and I'd like to feel that you trust me, that we are friends. But, honestly, I came tonight to talk of Mary Rose."

She would be glad to talk of Mary Rose, glad to talk of anyone but herself, and she left the morris chair that had proved such a safe shelter and took a gaily cushioned wicker one on the other side of the room.

"Isn't it a shame?" she asked a bit breathlessly. "I can't imagine how anyone who has seen that ducky child with her birdcage could have had the heart to steal her canary."

"Surely you don't think anyone who knew her took Jenny Lind?" He was astonished.

"Everyone says that Mr. Wells has acted very oddly. And Mary Rose told me herself that he swore at Jenny Lind. He's as hard as nails, you can see it in his face. I've heard that he has complained to Brown and Lawson that the leases are

not lived up to and that there is a child in the house. When you put two and two together you can't make much but four out of the result."

"The old murderer!" scowled Mr. Jerry. "If that's true I'd like—I'd like——"

"So would I!" Miss Thorley agreed with him heartily.

"Jim said something of the sort, but I told him he was crazy. He said he was going up the fire escape and see if he couldn't find the bird in Wells' flat, but I laughed at him. I didn't know the old man had complained of Mary Rose. Of Mary Rose!" he repeated, as if he could not understand how anyone could complain of Mary Rose. Mary Rose had been a joy to him ever since he had looked up from his car and seen her standing there in the boys' blue serge and with George Washington in her arms.

Miss Thorley nodded. "I'd hate to think what this house would be without her. She seems to have warmed it from the top to the basement. Perhaps you won't understand when I say it's as if she had humanized it. I'd hate to have it overrun with children!" hastily as she caught the

sudden flash of Mr. Jerry's eyes. "But Mary Rose—Mary Rose is different."

"Why don't you tenants get up a petition of some kind? It wouldn't do any harm to let the owner know that the rest of you are strong for the Donovans and Mary Rose."

"No one knows who the owner is. All business is transacted through the agents."

"The agents know," wisely. "It won't do any harm and it might do some good. The complaints of one tenant won't weigh as much as the requests of a dozen, believe me."

Miss Thorley drew her black brows together until they formed a line across her white forehead.

"I believe you're right," she said after a pause. "I'll ask Mr. Strahan to write one and we'll have all the tenants sign it. But that won't bring back the canary," forlornly.

"No, it won't bring back the canary," he repeated. "We'll have to get another pet for Mary Rose, one that she may have in the flat. No, not a canary. That wouldn't do at all. But I thought perhaps some goldfish. She loves to

watch a couple Aunt Mary has. Once she borrowed them."

"I know, for company for Mr. Wells when he was ill."

"Goldfish would give her something to think of until school opens. After that she'll have enough to do to keep her occupied."

Miss Thorley looked at him with surprise. "Do you know, that's really very thoughtful. I've been trying to think what I could do and I couldn't get beyond another bird. I had sense enough to see that that would never do."

"No, another bird wouldn't do. And tomorrow—I wondered if tomorrow you and Mary Rose wouldn't go off for the day in the car with Aunt Mary and me? We might run down to Blue Heron Lake for dinner. Mary Rose loves to motor."

"Why not take your aunt and Mary Rose? I'm afraid I——"

"Nothing doing!" he interrupted firmly. "Can't you trust me?" He looked her straight in the eyes as he asked. "I swear I won't say a word of love. We're friends now, you know, not—not

lovers. And Mary Rose adores you. She'd go through fire and water for you. Honest, she wouldn't be contented with me and Aunt Mary, but I know it would be all right if you were along."

She hesitated and bit her lip before she finally shrugged her shoulders and said: "Oh, very well. I'll go for Mary Rose."

"I knew you would. I knew you'd see the big sister, the humanitarian philanthropic friendly side of it." There was more than the hint of a twinkle in his eyes. "And one more thing." Mr. Jerry firmly believed in striking the iron before it had any chance to cool. "They have goldfish for sale over at the drug store on Twenty-eighth Street. Won't you walk over with me and help pick out a few? I'd like Mary Rose to find them when she wakes up in the morning."

She did not hesitate over this request. Perhaps she realized what a very persuasive way he had, for she laughed softly.

"I'll go. I'd do more than that for Mary Rose."

On the way they met Miss Carter and Bob Strahan returning from a fruitless quest among

the bird stores. But if they had not found Jenny Lind they had explained the situation to the proprietors of the shops and each of them had promised on his word of honor to telephone to Mr. Strahan the very minute that a canary was offered for sale.

The four went together to the drug store and after the globe had been bought and they had selected the half-dozen fish that were to live in it, they loitered at a little table over their ice cream.

"Gosh!" suddenly exclaimed Bob Strahan. "I'm glad I'm not built on the plans and specifications that produced old Wells. I shouldn't want the theft of a kid's canary on my conscience."

"He will insist that Mr. Wells knows all about it," Miss Carter said mournfully. She could not help but feel that she was to blame. If she hadn't asked Mary Rose to bring up the parcel post package Jenny Lind might never have disappeared.

"Why?" asked Mr. Jerry curiously.

"Because!" Miss Carter and Bob Strahan made the rather unsatisfactory explanation a duet.

CHAPTER XVIII

WHEN Mary Rose opened her eyes the next morning the very first thing she saw was the glass globe in which flashing sunbeams seemed to dart.

"Why—why!" cried amazed Mary Rose, and she sat bolt upright.

Aunt Kate heard her and came in. "Do you like them, honey? Mr. Jerry and Miss Thorley brought them in last night. Mr. Jerry said you liked his aunt's goldfish, so he was sure you'd like some of your own."

"Did he?" All the gladness slipped from her face and voice as she remembered the pet she had lost. "You know, Aunt Kate, last night I just about decided I'd never have another pet. I'm—I'm so unlucky with them." Her lip quivered. "I don't seem to be able to keep one thing that really belongs to me."

"Nonsense!" Aunt Kate took her in her arms

and kissed her. "You'll keep me and your Uncle Larry. You can't lose us. Aren't they pretty?" She tapped the glass globe. "Seems if a body'd never get tired of lookin' at 'em. But get dressed, dearie. Breakfas's most ready an' Mr. Jerry wants you to go out to Blue Heron Lake in his motor car. His aunt an' Miss Thorley are goin' too. You're to be away all day an' have your dinner at a big hotel."

Not eighteen hours before Mary Rose would have danced and clapped her hands at such a delectable prospect, but now she lay back on her pillow and looked at her aunt. Two big tears gathered in her eyes.

"I can't go. Suppose we'd hear something from Jenny Lind."

"As if I wouldn't be here, an' your Uncle Larry. An' Jimmie Bronson's goin' to keep an eye on the cat an' dog. To be sure you're goin', dearie. Put your clothes on. Your breakfas's near ready an' your uncle's starvin'." And to avoid any further argument she bustled away.

Mary Rose lay and watched the goldfish for another sixty seconds and the big tears dropped

from her eyes to her pillow. But even if her heart was broken she had to admire those flashes of gold in the clear water.

"They're so—so beautiful." She was surprised to find herself laughing when one fish pushed against another. She had thought she never would laugh again. She turned and hid her face. "No matter how beautiful they are I shan't ever forget you, Jenny Lind," she promised. "Ever! I'm not the forgetting kind of a person and I'll never stop trying to find you. May the good Lord take care of you now and evermore. Amen." It wasn't exactly a prayer but it comforted Mary Rose as if it had been.

She slipped out of bed and began to dress soberly and slowly instead of singing and hurriedly as usual. When she had combed her hair and washed her face and hands she went into her closet and came out with the detested boys' suit of faded blue serge. Her red lips were pressed into a firm line as she put it on.

"My soul an' body!" exclaimed astonished Aunt Kate when she came in with the coffeepot and saw a boyish little figure in the doorway.

Mary Rose ran to her. "I was so proud of wearing girls' clothes that maybe that was the reason Jenny Lind was taken from me," she explained in a whisper. "I just hate these, Aunt Kate. I despise them! But I'm going to wear them. You know proud people are punished, the Bible says so, and I was as proud—as proud as the proudest. That's the way I've thought it out and that's why I put on this hateful suit this morning."

"I think you're wrong, Mary Rose," began Aunt Kate, while Uncle Larry put down the colored supplement that he had been holding out so enticingly to look at his niece, who appeared smaller than ever in the shabby blouse and shrunken knickers. "You haven't had so much to be proud of, a few of Ella's old clothes. But if you feel better in those, why, wear 'em. Where's your goldfish? Don't you want to show 'em to your uncle? Miss Thorley an' Mr. Jerry'll understand," she said as Mary Rose ran to bring the goldfish. "An' I hate to argue with her today. She can wear those now, but tomorrow she'll put on proper girls' clothes to go to school. I don't

care what Brown an' Lawson or anyone else says. You hain't heard anythin' from them, have you?"

"Nothin' yet, but it won't be good news when it comes. We'll have to move, Kate. Ol' Wells has seen to that an' after last night I don't care so much. If honest faithful work don't count for anythin' here I dunno as I want to stay. I can find another job. It won't be as easy as this. This was just velvet for a man like me."

"Well, if they have the nerve to fire you just because you're givin' a home to an orphan niece I hope Mr. Strahan writes it all over the front of his paper. I'd like to see it in big red letters an' then maybe the owner an' Mr. Wells'd be ashamed of themselves."

"S-sh! S-sh!" cautioned Uncle Larry but not quickly enough, for Aunt Kate's voice was shrill and excited and Mary Rose in her little room heard every word.

She stood and looked about her bewildered. It wasn't possible that anyone, even the owner of the Washington, would take her Uncle Larry's work from him just because a little girl was living with

him? Aunt Kate must be mistaken or perhaps she had misunderstood. She often found herself mistaken in her ideas of what grown people meant. She tried to think she was now as she took the globe and carried it carefully into the dining-room and placed it on the table where the sunlight fell on the fish and polished their golden scales.

"That's what I call a han'some present," admired Uncle Larry in the same hearty voice Mary Rose usually heard from him.

She looked up quickly. He wouldn't speak like that if he were going to lose his work. She hadn't understood. That was it. Children often didn't understand grown people.

"They are beautiful," she said softly. "I wasn't very welcoming to them at first because I was afraid Mr. Jerry meant them to take the place of darling Jenny Lind and nothing can do that—fish nor dogs nor cats nor squirrels nor anything. But when I watched them swim I found they could have a place of their very own and so I'm very glad now to have them."

"Of course you are. But eat your breakfas',

child, or Mr. Jerry'll be callin' for you before you're ready."

That was a wonderful Sunday to Mary Rose. She sat on the front seat beside Mr. Jerry and as neither of them felt much like talking they enjoyed the silence. Mile after mile was left behind them and when they began to pass through small towns and villages Mary Rose sat up straighter.

"They're like Mifflin, only different," she murmured vaguely.

When they came to a little white meetinghouse standing all by itself near the road Mr. Jerry's Aunt Mary asked him to stop and let them go to church.

"It seems as if it would be rather pleasant to go to a simple service such as they must have here," she suggested.

"I'll put it to a vote," Mr. Jerry offered obligingly. "Mary Rose, what do you say?"

"Oh, let's!" she begged. "And I'll pretend I'm sitting with Gladys in the Evans pew and that Mr. Mann is preaching."

Mr. Jerry stopped the car by the roadside and they all stepped out.

"What a doggone idiot I was," Mr. Jerry whispered to Miss Thorley as they followed his Aunt Mary and Mary Rose; "I might just as well have taken the kid to Mifflin as to Blue Heron Lake, but I never thought of it."

"This is better," Miss Thorley told him with pleasing promptness. "Mifflin would have reminded her of Jenny Lind. You can take her there some other day."

"Will you go, too?" eagerly. "I'll go any day you say."

But she only smiled over her shoulder as she went up the steps and into the meetinghouse. A quiet peaceful hour followed and when the service was over Mary Rose slipped one hand around Mr. Jerry's fingers and gave the other to Miss Thorley.

"I feel a lot better," she said. "I think it was awfully kind of that minister to preach about sparrows. Jenny Lind isn't a sparrow but she's a bird and when the Lord looks after sparrows so carefully I'm sure he'd keep an eye on a canary."

She was more like her old self as they went on,

faster now, because, as Mr. Jerry explained, they had to make up the time they had spent in church and if they didn't reach the hotel at Blue Heron Lake in time for dinner all the chicken breasts and legs would be eaten and there would be nothing left for them but backbones and necks.

"That's all Gladys ever has," Mary Rose told him importantly. "You see they have such a big family that all the other pieces are gone before it is her turn to be helped. She used to love to come to dinner at our house so she could have a wishbone. When her grandmother dies she'll have a leg."

"My gracious!" murmured Mr. Jerry's Aunt Mary.

"My word!" giggled Miss Thorley.

Fortunately they reached the hotel in time to have their choice of chicken and everyone was glad to see that Mary Rose was hungry and seemed to enjoy her dinner. After dinner they went for a ride on the lake in a launch and then they sat in the shade of a clump of linden trees and watched the bathers.

"Why didn't I tell you to bring your bathing

suits?" Mr. Jerry asked suddenly. "What a dolt I was not to think of it."

"You're not a dolt!" Mary Rose said indignantly, although she hadn't the faintest idea what a dolt was. "And I couldn't have brought one for I haven't one. And anyway I wouldn't care to make too merry today." Her face clouded as she remembered why she did not wish to be too merry.

It was long, long after her bedtime when the car stopped in front of the Washington and it was a very sleepy tired little girl who was taken into Uncle Larry's strong arms.

"I've had such a wonderful time," she murmured, half asleep. "Uncle Larry, have you found Jenny Lind? We don't have to worry about her any more because I know now the Lord has his eye on her."

Uncle Larry looked over her head to Mr. Jerry. "I can't thank you, sir," he said in a hushed voice, "but you've been a kind friend to the little girl today."

"She's such a darling one has to be kind to her." Miss Thorley answered for Mr. Jerry and blushed

when she realized it. "Don't you bother, Mr. Donovan. I'm like Mary Rose, I know everything will be all right."

"I hope so, Miss Thorley. Thank you again, sir." And he went in with Mary Rose asleep in his arms.

"I can't thank you, either." Miss Thorley held out her hand to Mr. Jerry after she had said good night to his Aunt Mary. "I've had a perfect day and it was mighty good of you to plan it for Mary Rose."

He took her hand in both of his. "It was mighty good of you to come with Mary Rose and me. And we're going to be friends, now, real friends?" he asked gently.

She caught her breath and looked at him quickly. "Y-es," she said slowly. "Of course, we'll be friends. I—I'm glad you are willing to be friends."

Mr. Jerry laughed oddly. "I've learned about the value of that half loaf. Good night."

CHAPTER XIX

NOTHING had been heard of Jenny Lind. Jimmie Bronson had made a surreptitious visit to Mr. Wells' apartment and had escaped only "by the skin of his teeth," he assured Mr. Jerry.

"I didn't get any further than the window before that Jap caught me and I didn't see any bird-cage. But I shan't give up, Mr. Longworthy. I'll find that canary yet!"

Everybody seemed more anxious now than Mary Rose. She was so confident that the Lord had his eye on the missing Jenny Lind that she almost stopped worrying. Aunt Kate resolutely refused to allow her to go to the Lincoln School in the blue serge suit.

"You'll wear proper clothes or you don't stir a step," she said sternly. "An' if you don't go to school the truant officer'll come here an' like enough I'll be arrested for not sendin' you. If

you don't want your poor aunt to go to jail you'll stand up an' put on this dress I bought 'specially for you."

She had not been able to resist a sale of children's clothes at the Big Store and had bought three dresses for an eleven-year-old girl. She brought one out that morning, a blue and green and red plaid gingham with a white collar and a black patent leather belt. Mary Rose was speechless with admiration when she saw it. But if she had been so proud of Ella's old clothes that she had to be punished, what would she be in this ducky dress?

"I can't trust myself in it, Aunt Kate. It's too beautiful. It's fine enough for a princess."

But after Aunt Kate had explained that if Mary Rose did not wear the dress she might have to go to jail Mary Rose had no choice. She would have to wear the frock and go to school and try her very hardest not to be proud. She had only to think of Jenny Lind to humble her spirit.

She was very sedate as she walked with Aunt Kate. It did not seem possible that at last she

was going to enter the big school building with towers and battlements enough for a fortress.

"It is like a castle. I don't care what Mr. Jerry said," she told Aunt Kate as they went up the steps and into the principal's office where a pleasant-faced middle-aged lady looked questioningly at Mary Rose and asked how old she was.

From force of habit Aunt Kate said hastily: "Goin' on fourteen."

"Fourteen!" The principal was plainly astonished. "She's very small for her age. And backward if she is only in the sixth grade. She should be in high school at fourteen. Has she been ill?"

Backward! It was bad enough to be called small for her age, but to be told that she was stupid was more than Mary Rose could bear in silence. She opened her mouth to explain and then she remembered that she had promised she would mortify her pride so she said never a word, although she thought she would burst at having to keep quiet. But Aunt Kate's pride was also touched and she stammered hurriedly that she should have said her niece was going on eleven.

"That sounds more normal." And the principal smiled as she led the way into a big sunny room full of children. Mary Rose drew a sigh of relief when she saw the teacher. Mr. Jerry was all wrong about her, for she was not an old witch. She was as pretty a young woman as any child could wish to have for a teacher. She smiled at Mary Rose in a very friendly fashion and found her a seat beside a little girl with wonderful long yellow curls. It was delightful to be with children again and Mary Rose's face rivaled the sun.

Aunt Kate had a strange ache in her heart as she watched her. Mary Rose would make friends here, friends of her own age, and she would miss her. But that was the way of the world, she thought philosophically. When she was quite convinced that Mary Rose was happy and contented and could find her way home alone she left the school.

Mrs. Bracken called to her from her window as she passed and she went in to be introduced to Mrs. Bracken's niece, Harriet White.

"She is going to live with us," Mrs. Bracken

explained, her arm around Harriet's waist. "Isn't she a big girl for thirteen? I meant to be back yesterday so she could start in school today, but we were delayed. I was just telling her there was another little girl, Mary Rose, in the building."

Mrs. Donovan looked almost enviously at Harriet White who was thirteen and who appeared at least two years older. How easy everything would have been if Mary Rose had been as large. She sighed and then smiled, for she knew that she would not change small Mary Rose for big Harriet White if she had the chance. She gazed pleasantly at Mrs. Bracken, whose face seemed to have found a new expression in Prairieville, and said from the very depths of her heart:

"If you enjoy her half as much as we enjoy our niece you'll consider yourself a lucky woman to have her."

"I know I'm a lucky woman," Mrs. Bracken answered heartily. "I never realized what made this building seem almost depressing until Mary Rose came into it. What is this Mrs. Schuneman tells me about Mary Rose's bird? I'm so

sorry. She was so attached to Jenny Lind. Do you really think that Mr. Wells had anything to do with it?"

"Oh, Mrs. Bracken, how could any man with a heart steal a child's pet bird!" Mrs. Donovan tried her best to be discreet as she told the story.

"Of course, we all know that Mr. Wells is queer," Mrs. Bracken remarked when she finished. "Mrs. Schuneman said she understood that he had complained to Brown and Lawson, but don't you worry, Mrs. Donovan. Mr. Wells is not the only tenant and I rather think the rest of us will have something to say. If he objects to Harriet Mr. Bracken will tell him quite plainly what he thinks. And there are others. We all like Mr. Donovan. He's a good janitor, willing and pleasant, and we won't let him be discharged without a protest. Perhaps I shouldn't tell you, but Mr. Strahan has written out a petition to send to the owner and everyone in the building will sign it, I know, except perhaps Mr. Wells." And she laughed as if Mr. Wells' not signing the petition was a joke. "One against twenty won't have much influence."

Mrs. Donovan put out her hand and touched Mrs. Bracken's white fingers, something she would not have dared to do two months earlier. "Thank you for telling me that. Larry's tried, I know, and it isn't easy to please so many people. We don't know who the owner is so we can only talk to the agents, but a petition signed by everybody ought to prove to them that Mary Rose isn't a nuisance."

"Anything but a nuisance!" insisted Mrs. Bracken.

CHAPTER XX

MARY ROSE had decided to write a letter. The more she thought of what she had heard her Aunt Kate say to her Uncle Larry that Sunday morning the less she liked it. She would write to the owner of the Washington, to the man who made laws so that children and cats and dogs were not allowed in his house, and tell him just how it was; and then, why, of course, he would say it was all right, that Uncle Larry could stay and she could stay, and everything would be as it was except for Jenny Lind. Her lip quivered as she tried hard to remember that the Lord had his eye on Jenny Lind.

She had a box of paper of her own with cunning Kewpie figures across the top of each sheet. Miss Carter had given it to her one day when Mary Rose told her of a letter she had received from Gladys. The letter to the owner of the Washington was not as easy to write as the an-

swer to Gladys' note had been. She screwed her face into a frowning knot as she tried to think what it was best for her to say.

DEAR MR. OWNER: [That much was easy.]

This letter is from Mary Rose Crocker, who lives in the cellar of your Washington house. I mean the basement. We call them cellars in Mifflin where I used to live, but in Waloo they are basements. Uncle Larry said you have a law that won't let children live in your house. I don't understand that, for there have always been children. Adam and Eve had them and most everybody but George Washington. He never did. Is that why you named your house after him? My mother died when I was a tweenty baby and my father is in Heaven with her, too, and I had to leave Solomon, he's my dog, in Mifflin and board out my cat, but he's self-supporting now and my bird has been stolen, so there isn't anyone but just me in the cellar. I mean basement. Aunt Kate and Uncle Larry are my only relatives on earth and if I don't live with them I'll have to go to an orphan's home, which I shouldn't like at all. But if you won't let Uncle Larry keep his job and me, too, of course I'll have to go. I'll try and not make any noise and be quiet and good if you'll please let me stay and please, please, I'm getting less of a child every day. When I came I was going on eleven and now I'm almost going on twelve, for my birthday is in two months. Aunt Kate doesn't know I'm writing to you. Neither does Uncle Larry. I thought of it all myself when I heard Uncle Larry tell Aunt Kate you were going to take his job

away if I lived with them. I know I shouldn't have listened, but I did. Perhaps you've never been an orphan and don't know what it means to have all your parents in Heaven when Gladys Evans has twenty-seven relations here on earth. But I shall be much obliged if you won't take Uncle Larry's job away from him and if you'll let me live with him. God bless you and me.

Your obedient servant and friend,

MARY ROSE CROCKER.

It was a long letter and quite covered two sheets of Kewpie paper. There were many blots and more misspelled words. Mary Rose frowned as she looked at it. It was the best she could do. She was uncertain how to get it to the owner and she did not wish to ask her uncle. Mr. Jerry could tell her. He knew everything. And holding the closely written sheets in her hand she ran across the alley.

Fortunately Mr. Jerry was alone under the apple tree. She handed him the letter and watched his face anxiously while he read it.

"Is it all right?" she begged. She had George Washington cuddled in her arms and hid her face against his soft fur coat as she asked. "I know the words aren't spelled right but I'm only in the

sixth grade. Perhaps I should have put that in? But is the meaning right?"

Mr. Jerry coughed twice before he answered. "Just right, Mary Rose. Exactly right! I couldn't have done it better and I've been to college. Write on the envelope: 'To the Owner of the Washington' and I'll take it over to the agents myself."

"Oh, will you!" Mary Rose had been puzzled how to get it to the agents. She decided then and there that she would never be puzzled over anything again. Mr. Jerry could do everything. First he had taken her cat and then her dog and her friend from Mifflin and now her letter. Her heart was filled with a passionate devotion to him as she laughed tremulously. She was both proud and happy to possess such a resourceful friend. "Don't you think Mr. Owner sounds a little more respectful? You see," her voice shook, for it meant so much to her, "I don't know him at all. I've never had any chance to make friends with him."

With Mr. Jerry's fountain pen she wrote carefully: "Mr. Owner of the Washington."

Then she folded the letter smoothly and dropped a kiss on it before she put it in the envelope.

"Just for friendliness," she said when she met Mr. Jerry's eyes and she blushed. Even her ears turned into pink roses.

He caught her in his arms and hugged her.

"Mary Rose," he said and his voice was not quite clear, "you're absolutely the friendliest soul I know!"

"That's what I try to be, Mr. Jerry." Her arm slipped up about his neck. "Daddy said I was to be friendly and the friendlier I was the easier it would be."

CHAPTER XXI

MARY ROSE loved her school. It was too delightful to be with children again and she made new friends rapidly. After supper she liked to run up to the third floor and tell Miss Thorley and Miss Carter what a wonderful day she had had and they always seemed glad to hear. She often found Mr. Strahan there and generally there were grapes or pears or peaches or candy to nibble while she told her tale.

Mr. Strahan had written a lot of stories out of Mary Rose's experiences and he grinned with delight as he heard her talk of school. He saw her as a mine of human interest tales.

"If it hadn't been for her I'd never have kept my job this summer," he told Miss Carter and Miss Thorley, one night after Mary Rose had gone. "The old man liked the stuff she told me and it gave me a chance to show what I could do. I've a regular run now and a regular salary." He

looked across at Miss Carter and colored a bit. "My foot's on the ladder now for keeps."

Miss Carter laughed and colored a bit, too, as she hoped that his foot was there "for keeps." Miss Thorley caught the exchange of glances with an odd little contraction of her heart. Was that the way the wind was blowing? Funny she hadn't noticed anything before. If Blanche went away she would be left alone—alone with her work and her independence. She shivered involuntarily. Once that had been all she wanted. Why didn't they satisfy her now? They should satisfy her. She'd work harder than ever on jam advertisements and when she had saved a lot of money she'd go to New York and get a big position and some people would have to admit that it would have been a waste to tie her down to a humdrum —what was it Mary Rose had said?—"home for a family." Her lip curled with scorn. Mary Rose was only a child. She didn't know that homes and families were not the most important things in the world. Someone else had told her what was the most important, but she would not think of him. She just would not. And anyway

all he wanted now was friendship. Men were so constant. Her nose tilted. She felt so much more scorn than a curled lip could express that her nose had to tilt. But until she could save a lot of money and go to New York she would stay right there in the Washington and listen to Mary Rose's experiences at the Lincoln School.

"It isn't like the school at Mifflin one bit, but I like it just the same. And I've made a lot of new friends. I never realized how you needed friends your own age until today. I've managed very well and been happy until—until," she gulped as she remembered what had happened to make her unhappy, "the other day, but it's such fun to have friends your own size. There's that girl at Mrs. Bracken's. She's older and bigger than I am, but Mrs. Bracken said we could be friends and there isn't as much difference as there is between me and Grandma Johnson. And we're friends. There's a boy with only one leg in my class," importantly. "He's going to tell me how he lost the other one tomorrow. And a girl, Anna Paulovitch. Isn't that a funny name? She was born in O-Odessa, Russia. I never knew anyone who

was born in Russia before. It's very interesting. Do you know," her voice dropped to a whisper, "that two years ago she lost all of her hair. She was sick and it disappeared until now there isn't even a single solitary hair on any part of her head. It's as bare, as bare," she looked about for a comparison but could not find one that would suit her, "as anything could be bare. It's very strange."

"And does she go to school without any hair?" asked Bob Strahan, trying to visualize Anna Paulovitch's bare pate.

"Oh, no! You can't go to school without hair. So last summer Anna picked berries for a farmer and saved every penny and soon she had enough to buy a wig. Her own hair was black and she hated it. She always wanted yellow curls and so when she bought her wig she bought long yellow curls. They're perfectly beautiful. You'd never guess they didn't grow on her own head. She showed me because I'm her friend. We're in the same number class."

"Ye gods! Long yellow curls on a swart-faced black-eyed Russian." Bob Strahan laughed at the combination.

Miss Carter looked at him reproachfully as she swung the conversation to the safe subject of Mrs. Bracken's niece.

"I wonder what Mr. Wells will have to say about her?" she asked.

"He can't steal her canary for she hasn't one," muttered Bob Strahan.

Mary Rose caught the words, low as they were uttered.

"You don't think Mr. Wells has my Jenny Lind?" She was so astonished that her eyes popped as far open as they could pop. "He hates birds. He told me so himself when I offered to lend her to him. And we're friends. Not friends like us but sort of friends. I'm sure he didn't take her," she insisted. "I must go now. Aunt Kate said I could only stay a minute. Good night."

"I wish I could be as sure of old Wells as she is," Bob Strahan said when the door closed behind her.

Mary Rose hesitated as she came to Mr. Wells' door. She did not believe that he had taken Jenny Lind and if he heard that people thought

he had, he would be so hurt and grieved. She would have to stop and tell him that she didn't believe it, anyway, not for a moment, and if he wanted to borrow her goldfish any time, he could. She'd be glad to loan them to him. That would show how she trusted him. She knocked rather timidly. Mr. Wells, himself, opened the door.

"What d'you want?" he demanded gruffly. He had a letter in his hand and he made Mary Rose feel as if she had interrupted very important business.

"I just stopped to tell you that no matter what other people say I know you didn't steal Jenny Lind," she stammered.

"Steal Jenny Lind!" he thundered. His face was one black frown. "Who said I did? Come in." He motioned toward the living-room.

"Everybody's saying so," faltered Mary Rose. "But I know you better than they do. You couldn't steal the only pet a little orphan girl had, could you?"

Mr. Wells opened his mouth twice before he could say a word and then he only grunted a sentence that Mary Rose could not understand. He

threw the letter he held on the table. An enclosure dropped from it and Mary Rose saw that there were Kewpies across the top of the paper. She recognized the writing also.

"Why—why!" she stammered. She was so surprised that she could scarcely speak at all. "That's my letter, the one I wrote to the owner of this very house."

A dull red crept up Mr. Wells' face into his grizzled hair. "Yes, I know," he rumbled. "I'm a lawyer and the owner is a client of mine. He gave it to me so I could advise him what to do."

"And what will you advise?" asked Mary Rose after a breathless silence. Her heart was beating so fast that she was almost choked. "Have you read it?"

"Yes, I've read it."

'Uncle Larry and Aunt Kate don't know I wrote it. I just had to because if Uncle Larry loses his job it's all my fault. Not all mine really for it wasn't exactly my fault that my mother died when I was six months old and that daddy went to Heaven in June so there was no one left to take care of me but Aunt Kate. I've tried to be good,"

she resolutely winked back a tear, "and not make trouble. Mrs. Schuneman and Mrs. Bracken and Mr. Bracken and Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Rawson and Miss Thorley and Miss Carter and Mr. Strahan like me awfully. They said so. I wish you'd please speak to them before you give your advice. Will you?" eagerly.

The frown on Mr. Wells' face grew very black and threatening. It made Mary Rose's little heart jump right into her mouth and she shut her white teeth tight so that it wouldn't jump out.

"It's—it's awfully rude of me to speak of it," she went on in a low shamed voice. "I shouldn't remind you, I know, but you are under an obligation to me. I was neighborly when you were sick. I brought you the goldfish. It isn't much that I ask, just for you to speak to the tenements. If they say I'm a nuisance, why I won't say another word because it's the law, but I *am* getting bigger every day, now. Please, promise me just that much?"

And Mr. Wells promised. He couldn't very well refuse. Mary Rose caught his hand and hugged it to her thumping little heart.

"You're a kind, kind man," she said. "I know you are. I don't care what people say. And you'll see I'm treated fair? That's all I ask, Mr. Wells, honest it is! Just for the owner to be fair. Good night. I'm going to tell everyone you didn't steal Jenny Lind."

CHAPTER XXII

THERE was a short story in the Waloo *Gazette* the next evening that would have interested Mary Rose very much if she had read it. It was one of the little incidents that have both a pathetic and a humorous appeal and it was very well written. It told of a little black-haired swarthy-skinned girl who had always longed for long yellow curls. When illness robbed her of the hated, black locks she had resolutely set to work to earn money to buy a wig that she might return to school. All summer she worked under the hot sun, picking berries for a neighboring farmer, her bald head covered with a ragged straw hat, and when the last berry was gathered and she had the required sum she had triumphantly purchased the long yellow curls she had craved always. And now, prouder than any queen, she was attending the Lincoln School. It was the sort of story that a city editor likes for

it brings shoals of letters with offers of help, to the newspaper office, and proves in a most practical way that it has been read.

Usually Mary Rose was home from school by four o'clock for at half-past three her room was dismissed and it never took her more than half an hour to say good-by to her numerous new friends and dawdle home.

But the afternoon after the story of the yellow curls appeared in the *Gazette,* Mary Rose was not at home at four o'clock. She was not at home at half-past four. Mrs. Donovan looked uneasily at the clock. It was not like Mary Rose to be so dilatory. At a quarter to five Mrs. Donovan put on her hat and walked up the street. She would go and meet Mary Rose. Perhaps the child had been kept after school, perhaps she had stopped to play in spite of the fact that she had been told she must come straight home from school always.

Mrs. Donovan walked the six blocks to the Lincoln School without seeing as much as the hem of Mary Rose's gingham skirt. The big school building loomed up in front of her silent and for-

lorn. She stared at it before she went up the steps and tried to open the door. It was locked. Then Mary Rose had not been kept after school. Where could she be? She might have gone home a different way so as to walk with one of her new friends. Of course, she was safe at home by now. Mrs. Donovan retraced her steps very hurriedly but she found no Mary Rose in the basement flat. It was so strange that she was worried. Where could the child be?

Suddenly she laughed unsteadily. What a fool she was. To be sure, Mary Rose had stopped to see Mrs. Schuneman or to exchange experiences with Harriet White who was now attending the Lincoln School, too. She ran up to the first floor to knock at Mrs. Schuneman's door and say breathlessly that she wanted to speak to Mary Rose at once. Mrs. Schuneman heard her and followed Mina.

"Mary Rose isn't here, Mrs. Donovan," she said. "Hasn't the little minx come home yet?"

"No, she hasn't!" Mrs. Donovan was most unpleasantly disappointed. "I don't understand it. I've told her again and again that she was to

come straight home as soon as school was out. Then she could go out to play. But she was to come home first."

"Perhaps she's over to Mrs. Bracken's?" suggested Mrs. Schuneman and she followed Mrs. Donovan across the hall.

But Mary Rose was not at Mrs. Bracken's. Neither was she in any other apartment in the Washington. Mrs. Donovan's ruddy face lost its color.

"She can't be lost," she said, expecting Mrs. Schuneman promptly to agree with her that Mary Rose could not be lost. "She's big enough to know where she lives if she is only ten." She did not care now if everybody knew how old Mary Rose really was.

"Of course, she isn't lost," everyone told her soothingly. "She knows where she belongs. Perhaps she is over at Longworthys'?"

But neither Mr. Jerry nor his Aunt Mary had seen Mary Rose that day. Jimmie Bronson, who came in while Mrs. Donovan was inquiring, had not seen her since noon. Mrs. Donovan was very uneasy as she went home.

"The little thing's that friendly and honest herself she thinks everyone else is friendly. She don't know anythin' about city folks. I wish she'd come," she told Mrs. Schuneman who came down to hear if Mary Rose had been found.

"You remember that girl over on Sixth Avenue who was kidnapped last—" began Mrs. Schuneman and clapped her hand over her mouth, hoping Mrs. Donovan had not heard.

But she had heard and her face whitened. The minutes dragged slowly by and Mary Rose did not come home. Larry Donovan was downtown and was late, also. When he did come in he could not understand at first that Mary Rose was missing.

"She's in the house somewhere," he insisted, "with Miss Carter or old lady Johnson."

"I've inquired at every flat in the building," half sobbed Mrs. Donovan. "I can't imagine where she is."

"Who's her teacher?" asked Bob Strahan. "Do you know her name? I'll telephone and ask her if she knows whether Mary Rose went off with any of the kids."

Mrs. Donovan stopped twisting a corner of her white apron.

"Her teacher's name is Choate, Isabel Choate. But I dunno where she lives," she wailed.

"The directory does," Bob Strahan said encouragingly. "And so, I'm sure, does the telephone book."

He had no difficulty in getting Miss Choate on the telephone, but the teacher only remembered that Mary Rose had left the building when the other children did. She had seen her go out of the school yard with a group of boys and girls. Who were they? She was sorry but she did not remember. They had not impressed her. She had noticed no one but Mary Rose, who had such a strong personality one had to notice her. She did hope that nothing had happened to her and she, too, remembered the little girl who had been kidnapped over on Sixth Avenue.

"Of course, nothing has happened to her," Bob Strahan said hurriedly. "She'll turn up all right."

He told Mrs. Donovan the same thing when he went back and reported the result of his interview.

"What shall I do?" Mrs. Donovan was twisting the corners of her apron into hard knots and her mouth twitched with nervousness. "She's never been out so late as this since she came to Waloo. An' she's all alone! I'll never forgive myself if anythin's happened to her."

"We'll go over to the police station," suggested Mr. Jerry. "What did she wear, Mrs. Donovan? The police will want a description of her clothes."

Mrs. Donovan sobbed as she described the blue and red and green gingham frock with the white collar and black patent leather belt that had been Mary Rose's pride.

"We'll call up the hospitals, too," Mr. Jerry said to Bob Strahan as they drove to the police station in his car. "It's just possible that she has been hurt, an automobile or something, and taken to a hospital If she was knocked unconscious she couldn't very well tell who she was."

"Gee!" exclaimed big-eyed white-faced Jimmie Bronson, who had jumped into the tonneau and was standing with his hands on the back of the

front seat, "I hope Mary Rose wasn't knocked insensible!"

The police had heard nothing of any little girl who answered to the description of Mary Rose but a careful note was made of what Mr. Jerry and Bob Strahan had to say of her disappearance. There had been no report of any accident in the district and no child had been kidnapped so far as the police knew. Mr. Jerry and Bob Strahan were disappointed. They felt baffled. It didn't seem possible that a little girl could have disappeared so completely as Mary Rose had disappeared. When they drove back to the Washington, Jimmie was not with them. He was going to make a few inquiries on his own hook, he told the two men.

"No news is good news, Mrs. Donovan," Mr. Jerry insisted. "Mary Rose is all right. No one could harm her."

"I wish I could believe that." Mrs. Donovan had lost control of herself and was sobbing bitterly. "Here it is after ten o'clock an' we don't know where the little thing is. Seems if bad luck was taggin' her. It isn't a week since her

bird was stolen and now—" she shuddered and hid her face in her apron.

"Nothing's happened to her," repeated Mrs. Schuneman with a poor attempt at firmness. "Nothing could happen to a child like Mary Rose. It's when you're looking for trouble that trouble comes, Mrs. Donovan, and Mary Rose never looked for trouble. She was too busy looking for friends."

"That's what she always said," exclaimed Grandma Johnson; "that the pleasant things come to the people who are looking for pleasant things but, land! see what's happened to her and if anyone ever looked for pleasantness it was Mary Rose. Why she even looked for it in us!" And she laughed harshly.

"And she found it, too," Mrs. Schuneman declared quickly. "Yes, she did. She looked deep enough to find the pleasantness we didn't know was there because we'd covered it up with so much disagreeableness. I'm not ashamed to admit that she made me see that so long as you live in a world with other people you owe some obligation to be agreeable to them. If each of us did

our share, as Mary Rose was always asking us to do, we'd find this world a friendlier place than it is."

"She must have said that to me a hundred times," sniffled Miss Adams. "I knew she was right all the time but I wouldn't say so."

"It's easy to get out of the habit of being friendly in the city," murmured Mrs. Matchan. "It's different in the country."

"I guess it's much the same, city or country. If she hadn't found Germania for me I'd have been in an asylum by now," asserted Mrs. Schuneman. "There I was all by myself and while a bird isn't a human being, it's a lot of company. And it's through Germania and Mary Rose that I've got acquainted with all of you."

"If it hadn't been for Mary Rose I doubt if Mr. Bracken would have asked me to go for Harriet," Mrs. Bracken said in a low voice.

It seemed as if each of them had something to say of what Mary Rose had done for her. Mary Rose's friendly nature, her undaunted belief in the friendliness of people and of the world in which she lived had made those whose lives she

had touched develop friendliness also. The dozen people gathered in the Donovan living-room said so, quite frankly.

Suddenly the clock struck eleven times. Mrs. Donovan burst into a perfect storm of tears. "She should have been in her bed hours ago!" she sobbed. "An' where is she? Where's Mary Rose?"

"Sh—sh!" There was a step on the stairs. It seemed as if everyone stopped breathing to listen.

CHAPTER XXIII

LARRY DONOVAN jumped to the door. But it was Mr. Wells' grim face that appeared in the circle of light and his grimmer voice that asked harshly:

"What's the matter? What's all this disturbance through the building, Donovan? Every door is open and there's a general turmoil."

They faced him indignantly, fellow tenants and janitor. Each had had some experience with him that had been more unpleasant than pleasant. All of them knew that he disliked Mary Rose, that he had complained to the agents because she lived in the basement with the Donovans. Each of them resented the selfishness that had brought him down to make another complaint when all of them were so worried and anxious. It was Bob Strahan who put some of this feeling into words.

"No doubt you'll be glad to hear that Mary Rose, the little girl who has been such a nuisance

to you, has disappeared?" he said sarcastically.

Mr. Wells looked at him from under his shaggy eyebrows. "What do you mean?" he snapped. "What do you mean?"

Everyone tried to tell him at once but Mrs. Donovan who was sobbing in her apron and could not speak. Mr. Wells looked at her oddly.

"Nonsense!" he said when the story was clear to him. "She's locked herself in somewhere as she did once before." He had heard of the time the wind had slammed Mrs. Bracken's door and shut Mary Rose inside. "She's fallen asleep."

"We've been in every flat but yours," Larry Donovan told him dully.

"Everyone but mine?" repeated Mr. Wells. "Well, she wouldn't go there." Then he remembered that Mary Rose had been there in a neighborly desire to be kind to him when he was ill, in a friendly wish to tell him of her belief in him when he was under suspicion, and he colored painfully. For all he knew she might be there now. She had a habit of going when and where she pleased. That was what made her such a nuisance

in his eyes. "You can come and see for yourself," he said sharply. "So far as I know there's no one there. Sako is out and I've just come in."

They trooped eagerly after him up the stairs to the second floor, and he had an unpleasant feeling that they expected to find Mary Rose locked in his apartment, a prisoner by his orders. Hadn't Mary Rose herself told him that he was suspected of doing cruel things? Well, he didn't care what they thought, he muttered to himself as he put his key in the lock. But he did care. Cross and crusty as he was, he was human, and deep in the hearts of all human beings is the desire to have people think well of them.

It was the first time any of them but the Donovans had been in the apartment. Mr. Wells threw open doors to closets and pantries. He even scornfully opened drawers and cupboards.

"Make a thorough search while you're about it," he snarled.

Under the sink in the kitchen Bob Strahan caught a bright gleam. He stooped down and picked up a piece of heavy brass wire. It had been broken at both ends and was twisted and

bent. Bob Strahan stared at it and whistled softly.

"What is it?" Miss Carter ran across to him.

He drew her aside and showed her the brass wire. "Do you see that? It's the kind of wire that bird cages are made of."

"Oh!" Miss Carter stared at him. She couldn't believe it. She turned and stared at Mr. Wells as he stood so contemptuously and watched his neighbors. There was a sneer on his face. "I w-wouldn't have believed that anyone would be so despicable!"

"He's been a selfish brute, always finding fault with everyone and everything. You might almost think he was the darned old owner himself," muttered Bob Strahan.

"He wouldn't make himself so disagreeable if he was the owner." Miss Carter nodded a wise head. "He'd be too anxious to please his tenants. No, it's just because he's so selfish and disagreeable and," she looked at the broken wire and thought of friendly Jenny Lind, "brutal!"

"You're quite sure the child is not here?" they heard Mr. Wells say in a voice that was as sar-

castic as a voice could be, and there was a most unpleasant glare in the cold black eyes. "Quite convinced that I haven't hidden her away to fatten for my breakfast?"

"Mr. Wells! Mr. Wells!" began Mrs. Donovan indignantly but her spirit died and she cried instead—quite involuntarily you may be sure: "Oh, Mary Rose said there was sure to be good in you if we'd look for it."

It seemed to Miss Carter that a black screen was drawn over Mr. Wells' face. He said not a word but walked to the door and threw it wide open. One by one his neighbors went out. No one said anything; there seemed to be nothing to say.

"Good night." Mr. Wells spoke with cold, almost ominous, curtesy and he would have shut the door in their faces if he had not caught the pitying look in a girl's eyes. A dull red crept into his face. Involuntarily he stepped toward Elizabeth Thorley. "If you hear anything of the child let me know," he said as if the words were forced from him, and then he slammed the door behind him.

As they went down the stairs Miss Carter dropped behind the others. So did Bob Strahan. As he waited for her he saw her dab her eyes with her handkerchief and he put out his hand and touched her arm.

"Look here," he spoke sharply. "That won't do. Mary Rose is all right, you know." And he gave her a little shake.

"I'd like to see that for myself, that she is all right." She dabbed her eyes again with the damp little square of linen.

He put a hand on each shoulder and looked directly into her tear-wet eyes. "Listen to me. I shan't go to bed until I do know that she's all right. I couldn't sleep. Mary Rose has done too much for me. When I think—Lord!—when she came here I was a friendless young cuss hanging on to a job by the skin of my teeth and now—You know I used to be crazy to know you when I met you in the hall and on the stairs and it was Mary Rose, bless her heart! and her canary who made it possible for us to be friends. I can't forget that and I'll find her."

She looked up and there was a light in her

eyes that caused his hands to tighten on her shoulders.

"You know I love you, honey," he said quickly. "I think I've always loved you and ever since I got a real grip on my job I've wanted to tell you. If you could care half as much for me as I do for you I'd—I'd—" he stopped before he told her what he would do for she had lifted her face and he had seen there that she did care, as much as he did. He stooped and kissed her.

She kissed him also and clung to him for a moment before she pushed him away.

"We—we shouldn't be thinking of ourselves now," her voice trembled. "We must think of Mary Rose."

CHAPTER XXIV

MRS. DONOVAN cried bitterly as she went down the stairs and Larry put his arm around her.

"There, there, Kate," he said. "Crying won't help any."

"If we could only do somethin', Larry!" She wrung her hands. "If we could only do somethin'! It seems awful just to have to wait an' wait. I—I can't bear it."

"I'll call up the morning paper." Bob Strahan and Miss Carter had slipped down behind the rest and no one noticed that they came in hand in hand. "It won't do any harm to run a little story about Mary Rose and then if she has strayed in anywhere or been found people will know where to take her."

"The mornin' paper!" cried Mrs. Donovan. "I can't wait for the mornin' paper. I want her now!"

The three men looked at each other and shook their heads. She might have to wait longer than for the morning paper to have news of Mary Rose. They felt so helpless. They had followed every clew, they had the assistance of the entire police force, but they had discovered nothing. They knew no more about Mary Rose than they knew when they had first discovered that she had disappeared.

Miss Thorley put her arms around Mrs. Donovan and tried to sooth her. All the red "corpuskles" had left her face now and her eyes had a strained frightened expression. It startled Mr. Jerry to see her show so much emotion. Usually she let one see very plainly that she was interested in only her own affairs. Tonight she had forgotten herself in a sweet sympathy for Mrs. Donovan and in her anxiety for her little friend. It made Mr. Jerry's heart thump to hear her speak to Mrs. Donovan so gently and so tenderly. It made him more determined to do something. He was just about to suggest that he should telephone to Mifflin although he was positive that Mary Rose had not run away, when

he heard a child's laugh on the street above them.

Kate Donovan heard it, too, and pushed Miss Thorley from her.

"It's Mary Rose!" she cried. "Thank God! It's Mary Rose!"

Before she could reach the door a burly policeman stood on the threshold. He held a bundle in his arms that struggled to reach the floor. Jimmie Bronson stumbled wearily behind them.

"Here's a very tired little girl for you," the policeman said, as he dropped Mary Rose into Mrs. Donovan's hungry arms.

"Mary Rose! Mary Rose!" Mrs. Donovan was so happy that she cried and cried. The tears fell on Mary Rose's face. "Where have you been? Where have you been?"

"Yes, Mary Rose, where have you been?" demanded an eager chorus. The tears had rushed to Miss Thorley's eyes also and when she discovered that, she discovered also that the hand with which she would have wiped them away was held fast in the firm grasp of Jerry Longworthy. How it had found its way there she never knew. She

snatched it from him, her face aflame, and there were no longer tears in her eyes.

Mary Rose hugged her aunt and beamed on her friends. Her eyes were like stars.

"How glad you'll be to hear what I've found!" she cried jubilantly. "I've been in the most wonderful place, a big flat building like this, only not so grand, but it has *children!* And pets, too! Dogs and cats! It has, Uncle Larry! I've seen them with my own eyes. Lots and lots of children! Babies and all kinds!" Her cheeks were scarlet. "I couldn't believe it myself at first but Anna Paulovitch said it was true and that it had always been like that. I asked her all about it so I could tell you, Uncle Larry, and you could tell the owner of the Washington. He can't know!"

"Never mind that, Mary Rose." Aunt Kate gave her a shake. "I want to know where you've been. Why didn't you come straight home from school as I've told you to, time an' again? You've frightened us all to death stayin' away so long."

Mary Rose looked regretfully at the people

she had frightened to death and then she smiled radiantly.

"Well, you see it was this way. You know there was a story in the newspaper last night about Anna Paulovitch's bald head and when she went to school the boys made fun of her and teased her to show them if she really was bald. It hurt her feelings dreadfully and she was afraid to go home alone so I said I'd go with her. It's a long way from here but I'm glad I went because I helped my friend and I found Jenny Lind."

"You found Jenny Lind!" Everyone was as astonished as Mary Rose could wish.

Bob Strahan and Miss Carter looked at each other and Bob dropped the piece of brass wire he had found in Mr. Wells' kitchen.

"Yes, I did. Isn't it just like a fairy story? You see if you do a kind thing a kind thing's done to you. I've told all of you that and you wouldn't believe me but now you've got to. Anna Paulovitch lives in this big friendly house I was telling you about. It isn't splendid and beautiful like this but it is friendly and there are a lot of children and pets. The law lets them live there. I

didn't suppose there was a house like that in all Waloo! Anna's mother goes out washing and her father's dead like mine. She has seven brothers and sisters that Mrs. Paulovitch has to find clothes and bread for. It's a good deal for one woman she said and I think it is, too. And right across the hall from the Paulovitch's, just like across the hall from Mrs. Bracken's to Mrs. Schuneman's, lives John Kalich. He's a messenger boy and his sister Becky's been in bed for seven years. She's nine now and Johnny's crazy about her. He came here with a message and when he saw Jenny Lind all by herself in the hall he thought how much Becky would like her. And Becky did like her. She hadn't ever seen a canary bird before. I told her she could borrow Jenny Lind for a while longer though I did want to bring her home tonight. But I thought, Aunt Kate, that since George Washington's supporting himself and I haven't spent the money I earned washing Mrs. Bracken's dishes and playing with the squirrels with Grandma Johnson I'd buy a bird for Becky for her very own. I'm going to let her keep Jenny Lind until then. It seems as

if I was always lending Jenny Lind, doesn't it? Aunt Kate," she stopped suddenly and looked appealingly at her aunt. "I'm so hungry! Can't I have some supper?"

"Haven't you had any?" Aunt Kate was horrified.

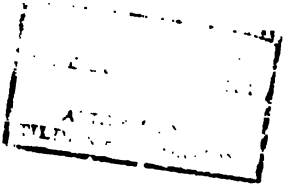
"I couldn't eat any at Mrs. Paulovitch's because she only had enough to go around once and anyway I don't think I care for Russian cooking, bread and lard. I'm an American, you know, and that's why I like American cooking best."

Miss Thorley leaned over and took Mary Rose as Aunt Kate jumped up murmuring: "Bread an' lard! My soul an' body!"

"Why didn't you come home before, Mary Rose?" Miss Thorley asked when she had Mary Rose cuddled in her arms. She couldn't remember when she had held a child before. It was odd but she had suddenly found that she wanted to hold Mary Rose.

"I got lost." Mary Rose blushed with shame. "I thought I was so smart I could come right home but I turned the wrong corner. I was away over on the other side of Waloo when a kind

MARIBEL WRIGHT [illegible]



lady found me and put me on a street car and gave me a nickel and told the conductor to keep his eye on me. But I forgot to tell her it was East Twenty-sixth Street and she sent me west. And then Jimmie found me."

"Good for you, James!" Mr. Jerry reached over to slap Jimmie on the back. "How did you do that?"

"I was just looking round," Jimmie answered vaguely. "I couldn't sit down and do nothing with Mary Rose lost. I had to look till she was found and I was lucky and ran across her. Gee, Mary Rose, but you did give me a scare! I was afraid you'd been kidnapped!"

"You know, Mary Rose, I told you always to come straight home from school," called Aunt Kate from the kitchen.

"I know," in a shamed voice. "And I always did until today, and today—why, I didn't. But I found Jenny Lind and I've made lots of new friends. Mr. Strahan," she peered around at Bob Strahan, "how did that story of Anna's curls get into the newspaper? Did you write it?"

Bob Strahan blushed until he was redder than

any tomato that ever ripened. "Yes, Mary Rose, I did," he acknowledged. "I thought it was a dandy little story of a brave girl and that it would be good for people to read."

"Of course, you didn't know that it would hurt Anna Paulovitch's feelings. She says she can't ever hold up her head again but I told her she hadn't done anything to be ashamed of and I'd stand by her."

"I'll stand by her, too!" Bob Strahan promised quickly. He had never thought of a story but as a story. The consequences it might have had not occurred to him. "And a lot of other people will stand by her. You should see the letters that came to the office to day with offers of help for Anna and her mother."

"Did they!" Mary Rose was delighted. "Then Mrs. Paulovitch won't have to work so hard. Oh, Miss Thorley," she drew the red-brown head down so that she could whisper in a pink ear, "if you could just talk to Anna's mother for a minute you'd know you wouldn't have to stop work to make a home for a family. She says it takes more than one pair of hands no matter how busy you

keep them. Will you go with me when I take the bird to Becky and talk to Mrs. Paulovitch?"

"Perhaps I will," stammered Miss Thorley, as she kissed the eager little face, feeling that the room was suddenly filled with Jerry Longworthy's eyes.

"Oh," Mary Rose jumped down and stood looking from one to the other, "but I am glad to be home again! It does seem a hundred years since I had my dinner. I don't think any girl ever had such a nice home or such nice friends as I have and it's just because I have a friendly heart!"

CHAPTER XXV

WHEN Mary Rose went to school the next morning Mrs. Donovan had half a mind to walk with her and make sure that she arrived there safely. After the day before it seemed to her that many dangers might lie in wait for Mary Rose and Mrs. Donovan had discovered that Mary Rose was very rare and precious. She watched her from the window and her eyes opened wide in astonishment when she saw Mary Rose stop and wait for Mr. Wells. He looked twice as grim and twice as cross as he had ever looked before to Mrs. Donovan as he came down the steps. But it was no wonder that he looked grim and cross. His experience of the night before, when he learned how his neighbors regarded him, could not have been pleasant. A cold shiver ran the full length of Mrs. Donovan's spine as she remembered that experience. If she had had any hope of remaining in the cozy basement flat

and keeping Mary Rose, it vanished at the sight of that scowling face. Mr. Wells would surely insist on having Larry discharged. She just knew he would.

Even Mary Rose's staunch and friendly soul was a bit daunted by Mr. Wells' very unfriendly appearance but she tried to speak to him as usual.

"Good morning, sir."

He looked down at her and his shaggy brows drew nearer together. Mary Rose had thought he could not look crosser but he managed to look considerably crosser as he grunted: "So you're back?" It almost sounded as if he wished she hadn't come back.

She blushed. "Did you hear that I was lost? I was so ashamed. I thought I could find my way anywhere in Waloo just as I could in Mifflin. But you couldn't get lost in Mifflin, no matter how hard you tried. You'd be sure to find yourself in the cemetery or at the post office or the lumber yard." She looked up at the cross face and ventured a smile. "You'll be glad to hear that I've found Jenny Lind," she said joyfully. "I knew all the time you hadn't borrowed her and I guess

now other people will be sorry they thought you stole her." She laughed and nodded to let him see how very glad she was that his innocence was proved.

Mr. Wells was too amazed to add anything to his scowl. "You've found your bird?" he asked stupidly.

"Yes, I have. I'll tell you all about it. Are you going my way? Usually I go up the other street, that's the shortest, but today I'm going over this way to meet Anna Paulovitch and walk with her so the boys won't tease her." And she told him about Anna Paulovitch and her yellow curls which had led to the discovery of Jenny Lind. "And I'm going to buy Becky a bird of her own with the money I've earned, because I don't have to pay a cent of board for George Washington. He's self-supporting, you know. Isn't it wonderful to be self-supporting? Mrs. Paulovitch has seven children and only one of them can earn anything. He's Mickey and he sells papers after school. If I were a gentleman and bought papers I'd always buy them of Mickey," she hinted delicately. "The other Paulo-

vitches who are over six have to go to school. It takes a lot of washing to make bread enough for them but Mr. Strahan thinks he has found friends to help Anna. Aren't you glad you were born in America instead of Russia?" She told him why he should be glad as they walked along.

He looked down at her curiously out of the tail of his eye but he said never a word. Indeed, Mary Rose gave him little opportunity for speech as she had so much to say. When they reached the corner where Anna Paulovitch waited across the street like a stolid figure of Patience, Mary Rose waved her hand. Anna Paulovitch responded like a semaphore.

"That's Anna! That's Anna Paulovitch," Mary Rose said eagerly. "Isn't her hair beautiful?" Mary Rose admired the long yellow curls immensely. "It seems a pity they couldn't have grown on her own head when she would have appreciated it so but I expect the Lord knew best. I'm awfully glad I met you so that I could tell you about Jenny Lind. You don't have to worry another minute for everyone knows now that you never touched her."

"Here, wait a minute!" Never had Mr. Wells' voice been gruffer nor his frown blacker. "How much is a canary? Can you get one for this?" He took a bill from his pocket and offered it to Mary Rose.

"Mr. Wells!" Mary Rose took his hand and squeezed it. "That's a lot. I'm sure you can get a splendid bird."

"Well, get one then," snapped Mr. Wells.

"You mean for Becky?" Mary Rose could scarcely believe her two small ears. "I'll be glad to." She regarded him with an admiration that should have made him feel enveloped in a soft warm mantle. "I'll tell her it's a present from a kind gentleman who wants to be her friend. Sometime I'll take you to see her. What shall we name her bird? You think and I'll think and then tonight we can choose. It must have something to do with music, you know. Good-by." She squeezed his hand again and started across the street but ran back. "I forgot to tell you something that's most important," she said in a low voice. "Did you ever imagine there would be a flat-house right here in Waloo where the law

lets children live? The Paulovitchs live in one. They do really. I saw them! And eats and dogs, too. I did! It wasn't like the Washington but it was a flat-house. It seemed such a friendly place. I thought you didn't know and now you can tell your friend who owns the Washington. I don't suppose he knows either. You haven't heard anything from him about me, have you?" She looked up wistfully. "I'd—I'd hate to have to go away to an orphan's home now," she whispered and there were tears in her blue eyes.

He looked down at her and coughed before he answered. "No, I haven't heard anything."

"If you see him today will you tell him of that friendly house I was telling you about? That there are flat-houses in Waloo where children can live? It might make him willing to let them live in his house. And please!" she clung to his hand, "please tell him that I'm growing older every single day I live!"

CHAPTER XXVI

THAT very afternoon Mr. Jerry and Mary Rose bought a canary for Becky and paid for it with the five-dollar bill that Mr. Wells had given Mary Rose. Mr. Jerry insisted that that particular bill should have been framed and Mary Rose insisted that Mr. Wells had said it was to buy a canary. She could not understand why Mr. Jerry had laughed nor why he said: "Oh, very well. But honestly, Mary Rose, it should be framed."

He took Mary Rose and the new canary in his car to the flat-building that allowed children to live in it. Becky wept with joy when she was told that the bird was to be her own. John was at home and he blushed and stammered as he tried to explain to Mr. Jerry that he hadn't meant any harm to anyone, cross his heart if he had! but as soon as he saw Jenny Lind he had thought what company she would be for Becky.

And Mr. Jerry kindly said he understood perfectly and that if John ever wanted any advice or help he was to come straight to him.

"You see it's a very friendly house," Mary Rose whispered as she and Mr. Jerry went down the long flights of stairs. "See how many children there are!"

Mr. Jerry looked about him. There were, indeed, many children of assorted nationalities and sizes. There could not have been a greater contrast to the orderly and clean, if childless, Washington.

"It's undoubtedly friendly, Mary Rose," agreed Mr. Jerry. "And there are lots of children but there are also lots of smells."

She crinkled her small nose. "I expect that's Russian," she suggested.

On their way home they passed Bingham and Henderson's big jam factory and Mary Rose caught a glimpse of Miss Thorley waiting for a street car. When she called Mr. Jerry's attention to the enchanted princess he deftly inserted his automobile between Miss Thorley and the approaching car.

"Room for one more passenger here," he said with a grin. "And the fare will be even cheaper."

"Do come with us, Miss Thorley!" begged Mary Rose. "See, here's Jenny Lind. You'll want to speak to her. And there's such lots of room right here with us. Isn't there, Mr. Jerry?"

"Scads of room. I don't see how you can hesitate." And he looked at the crowded street car where people were standing on the platform and the conductor was calling impatiently: "Move up in front!"

Miss Thorley looked also. The street car was not so inviting as the automobile. Prejudiced as she was she had to admit that. She laughed. "Oh, very well," she said.

Mr. Jerry jumped out and triumphantly robbed the street car company of a fare. He helped Miss Thorley in beside Mary Rose and Jenny Lind.

"You see there's lots of room," Mary Rose fairly bubbled with joy. "Just as Mr. Jerry said. Aren't you glad to see Jenny Lind again? I can't see that she has changed a feather."

"We'll leave her at the house and then run out to Nokomis for a breath of air. That friendly

flat of the Paulovitch's has almost strangled me. I have a great yearning for wide open spaces," Mr. Jerry told Miss Thorley over Mary Rose's head.

They left Jenny Lind with Aunt Kate and drove along the boulevards and around the lake.

"Isn't it a beautiful world?" asked Mary Rose suddenly. "I just love it and everybody in it! Don't you, Mr. Jerry?"

"I won't go so far as to say I love everybody but I certainly do love you, Mary Rose," he told her with pleasing promptness.

"And Miss Thorley, too?" demanded Mary Rose, jealously afraid that Miss Thorley might feel hurt if she were excluded from Mr. Jerry's affections. "She's the enchanted princess, you know," she reminded him in a whisper. "You must love her."

Mr. Jerry was so silent that Mary Rose pinched his arm.

"Sure, I love Miss Thorley," he said then, very hurriedly.

"And she loves you, don't you, Miss Thorley?" Mary Rose pinched Miss Thorley's arm to re-

mind her that something was expected of her, also.

There was a longer pause. Mary Rose had to pinch Miss Thorley's arm a second time and Mr. Jerry, himself, had to ask her in a funny shaky sort of a voice:

"Do you, Bess? Do you?"

Miss Thorley tried to frown and look away but she was not able to take her eyes from the two faces, the man's and the little girl's, which looked at her with such imploring eagerness. And what she saw in those two faces made her heart give a great throb. In a flash she knew, and knew beyond a doubt, that at last she could answer the question that had been tormenting her for over half a year. Long, long before that she had learned that everything one has in this world must be paid for and the question that had caused her to lose her red "corpuskles" had been whether she was willing to pay the price or whether she would go without the love and happiness and companionship that were offered to her.

She flushed adorably as she met Mr. Jerry's anxious eyes. "I—I don't want to," she said with

rueful honesty and then the words came in a hurried rush, "But I'm—I'm afraid I do! It's all your fault, Mary Rose." And she hid her pink cheeks in Mary Rose's yellow hair.

"My fault!" Mary Rose was surprised and puzzled and a wee bit hurt. She did not understand how she could be to blame.

But Mr. Jerry understood and with a quick exclamation he stopped the car. And there, behind a great clump of tall lilac bushes, he put his arms around them both. He kissed them both, too, Mary Rose first and hurriedly and then Miss Thorley, second and lingeringly.

"You dear—you darling!" he said to Miss Thorley and his breath came quickly and his eyes shone. He kissed her again. "You dearest! I've been the most patient lover on the footstool. Thank God, I was patient and just wouldn't be discouraged!"

Mary Rose caught his sleeve. "Are you the prince, Mr. Jerry?" she wanted to know and her eyes shone, too. "And is the spell broken? Have you driven away the old witch Independence? What did it?"

Mr. Jerry smiled at her flushed face. His own face was flushed and it had a wonderful radiance to Mary Rose as she looked up at him. "Love did it, Mary Rose." He squeezed her hand. "Love for you and love for me. Love's the only thing that can break old Independence's spell."

"Independence isn't a wicked witch, Mary Rose," interrupted Miss Thorley, who was squeezing Mary Rose's other hand.

"Isn't she?" Mary Rose was doubtful. Mr. Jerry had said she was a most wicked witch.

"A wicked witch would never make a girl brave and strong and self——"

"Self-supporting like George Washington," Mary Rose broke in jubilantly.

"Self-supporting," Miss Thorley accepted the word with a smile, "and keep her safe and busy until her prince came and she could be a real help to him. Independence isn't a wicked witch, Mary Rose. She's a girl's good fairy."

"Is she, Mr. Jerry?" Mary Rose had to have that theory indorsed before she could be quite sure. "Is she?"

"I expect she is," Mr. Jerry handsomely admit-

ted. "Perhaps I've been mistaken in the old girl. Anyway we're friends now, good friends. And, Mary Rose," he went on grandly, "ask me what you will and you shall have it, even to the half of my kingdom. I can't give you the whole of it because the other half, the half that includes me, is now the property of the most beautiful princess in the world."

The most beautiful princess in the world laughed in a funny choked sort of a way and she hugged Mary Rose. "You see, honey girl," she said, and Mary Rose loved her voice now that the enchantment was broken and she could hear how soft and sweet it was, "we own him together, you and I."

Mary Rose looked at their joint property with awe and admiration. "Do we?" It scarcely seemed possible. "Aren't we the lucky girls!"

CHAPTER XXVII

NEVER did a five-passenger automobile hold more happiness than that car of Mr. Jerry's as it was driven slowly back to the Washington that wonderful September evening. And never did the Washington look more pleasant. A little group of tenants, Mrs. Schuneman, Mrs. Willoughby, Mrs. Matchan and Miss Carter, were standing out in front talking of what had happened the night before. Mary Rose waved her hand to them and to Bob Strahan, who was hurrying up the street.

"Say!" he called. "I've found out who owns the Washington. It's old Wells!"

"Mr. Wells!" They stared from him up to the windows of Mr. Wells' apartments which were wide open.

"Yep! I had to dig up some stuff over at the building inspector's and ran plump against the fact that the owner of the Washington has always

been Horace J. Wells. No wonder he acted as if he owned it."

"But he told me he was a friend of the owner," objected Mary Rose, when she understood.

"I guess he isn't a friend to anyone but himself," murmured Bob Strahan.

Mary Rose sat there in the car and tried to think it out. If Mr. Wells really did own this strange two-faced building why hadn't he told her so when she had asked him to plead for her? She supposed that he had made up his mind that she would have to leave, that the law never would let children live there, and hated to tell her. Mary Rose felt as if a black cloud had fallen over this day that had been so happy and she winked rapidly to keep the tears from her eyes. She even tried to wave her hand to Aunt Kate when she came to the window.

Contrary to custom Aunt Kate did not wave back but ran out. She had a letter in her hand and looked very, very much pleased.

"You've heard good news, Mrs. Donovan. Who's died and left you a million?" asked Bob

Strahan. "Your face looks like a Christmas tree, all decorated and lighted."

"Have you?" Mary Rose asked and she jumped from the car and stood beside her aunt. "Have you heard good news, Aunt Kate? Has anyone left you a million?"

Aunt Kate stooped and put her arms around Mary Rose. "It's worth more 'n a million to me, Mary Rose. I've had the best of news. Larry's had a letter from Brown an' Lawson." She stood up and looked from one to the other of the people who had gathered around her. There were tears in her eyes. "They say we can keep Mary Rose. That so long as the tenants are willin' an' because she's gettin' older every day they won't insist on the rule of the house bein' enforced. They say Mary Rose can stay as long as we want to keep her."

"Hurrah for Mary Rose!" cried Bob Strahan and he flung his hat into the air.

"Hurrah for Mary Rose!" echoed Jimmie Bronson, who had run around the corner to stand grinning at Mary Rose.

Mary Rose stood quite still and stared at her

aunt. Her blue eyes were very large and as bright as stars. "I can stay," she said softly, almost unbelievingly. "I can really stay? Oh, where's Mr. Wells! Where is Mr. Wells! I want to tell him this very minute how much obliged I am. Oh, there he is!"

For Mr. Wells had actually come up the street and was about to slip grumblingly past the little group that blocked the walk. Mary Rose ran to him.

"I can't thank you," she said in a trembling voice, although the radiance in her face should have thanked anyone. "But I do think you are the very friendliest man that God ever made!"

Friendly! Mr. Wells actually blushed. He tried to frown but the attempt was a wretched failure for Mary Rose had dropped a soft kiss on the hand she had clasped. "See that you do what I promised the owner you'd do," he grunted, making a failure, also, of his attempt to speak crossly. "See that you grow older every day."

"Oh, I will!" promised Mary Rose. "I will!" she repeated firmly and she squeezed his hand as she looked up at the big red brick building that

could now be her home. The spell had been removed from it, too. There were tears in her blue eyes as she dropped Mr. Wells' hand and put out her arms as if she would take them all into her embrace. Her face was like a flower, lifted to the sun, as she cried from the very depths of her happy, grateful heart:

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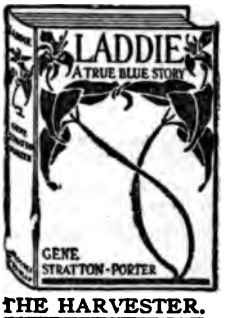

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